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Please help the children of Ceausescu.

The sight is sickening and terrifying. In crib after crib lie babies and toddlers who look like old people, their skin shrivelled, their skeletal faces bearing the unmistakable mark of approaching death. These pitiful children at a clinic in Bucharest are AIDS patients, the tiniest victims of the brutal, backward regime of Romania's fallen dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu.

TIME MAGAZINE 19.2.90.

This is just one aspect of the gruesome legacy of Ceausescu's years of misrule.

Contraception, abortion and sex education were outlawed in Romania in a desperate attempt to boost the workforce.

It resulted in thousands of unwanted children, abandoned by parents who could see no way of supporting them in a country where food of any description was already dreadfully scarce.

Vast numbers of the children now crammed into Romania's 205 orphanages are the survivors of back street operations.

Many are severely handicapped and live in conditions of appalling squalor. Most pitiful of all among these tragic children are those under the age of six who number around 14,000 spread throughout sixty-four orphanages.

(It is estimated that one in four of these children is dying of AIDS.)

There is simply not enough food available to feed any of the children adequately and most suffer from severe malnutrition.

Standards of hygiene are pathetically low due to a lack of proper equipment and facilities.

There is a chronic shortage of staff. By day, there are just four or five nurses for every 100 children and only one doctor and one psychiatrist for every 150-200 children in the orphanages. By night, there are even fewer staff on duty.

Even the most basic essentials such as nappies and plastic sheeting are non-existent, so the children soil the rags they are dressed in and the mattresses of their cots are rotting.

The stench throughout these institutions is overpowering.

Dysentry is common and many of the children suffer from chronic bowel disorders.

Often they are left lying unattended in their own excrement. The most severe cases are kept naked because naked bodies are easier to clean.

How you can help right now.

The Romanian Orphanage Trust was set up by Mary Gibson, a Dorset grandmother, who was so appalled by what she witnessed on a visit to a Romanian orphanage that she vowed to raise £10,000,000 to help ease the suffering and put an end to the misery.

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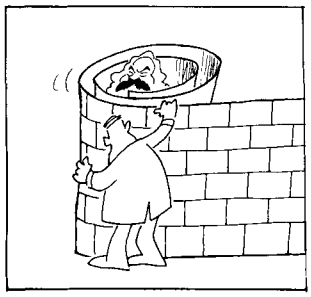
Walter Laqueur

The Moscow News, Tomorrow

Forecasting the Soviet-Russian Future



POLITICAL PREDICTIONS are easiest to make when they are least needed, when the political barometer points to continuity. They become more difficult at a time of rapid and violent change. For those putting safety and caution above everything else, comment on the present situation in the Soviet Union is a subject to be shunned. They will be well advised to be guided by the injunction to be silent and safe. But they may have to be silent for rather a long time.

My preoccupation here is not with the fate of an individual leader or group of leaders, but with general developments affecting Soviet society and the Soviet state in the new decade. Such a review has to discuss a variety of possibilities, and this may disappoint those who search for certainties. But since Soviet politics are no more predestined than those of other countries, one cannot reasonably expect much more. If a man will begin with certainties (as Francis Bacon noted), he shall end in doubts. If he starts with possibilities, however, he may end in probabilities.

There is general agreement that momentous events have taken place in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The potential implications of the reform movement in the Soviet Union are far-reaching, the revelations of *glasnost* astounding. It caused a wave of euphoria—more, admittedly, in the West than in the East, where greater awareness prevailed of the enormous difficulties facing the reformers. It also caused the breakdown of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe.

By early 1989, however, it was seen that the results widely expected in the early stages of *perestroika* were not forthcoming. Some blamed this on the policy-makers, for not having been radical enough. Others, on the contrary, complained that there had been too much experimenting on too many fronts, that the old system had by no means been all bad, and that it was wrong to try to introduce to the Soviet Union all kinds of political, social, and economic systems (such as the free or open market and parliamentary democracy) which were ill-suited to its traditions, its aspirations, and its specific needs. Yet others argued that it had been illusory to expect palpable change within a few years. It would take decades to reform the country; in the meantime a strong hand would be needed to steer the country through the coming storms.

Sceptics judged that the régime was "not reformable" and predicted that attempts to tinker with it would be in vain, resulting merely in further decline or even sudden collapse. Others, in more optimistic vein, believed that the cohesive forces and inner resources of the country should not be underrated. Despite temporary failures, political zigzags and setbacks, there would be progress. . . in the long run. In any case, there was no alternative but to try. The crisis had existed for decades; but under the conditions prevailing before 1985 it had been unthinkable to admit that the state of affairs had been less than "perfect" and future prospects less than "brilliant". A more realistic assessment had begun to prevail only with the coming of *glasnost*.

In the West it was widely agreed that the changes had come as a total surprise. Who would have assumed in 1985 that within three years there would be so much freedom of expression? The Soviet régime, some Western circles believed, had been relatively stable and the population relatively content. Similarly, some observers of the East German scene assumed right up to Erich Honecker's downfall in October 1989 that the régime was not unpopular, and that in view of its many achievements (*Errungenschaften* was the echoing word), the leadership had no reason to fear for its political survival. Others had taken a less sanguine view of conditions in Eastern Europe; they were aware of the unfolding crisis, if not of its full extent. But even those who had noted the signs of crisis had been unable to say with any confidence when change would come—and exactly how it would manifest itself.

Today, the situation is even more complicated than before 1985. Account has to be taken of political polarisation, and of the social and national unrest which previously could not show itself to the same extent. Consistency was the fruit of stagnation; today there is neither the one nor the other. Before 1985 nothing seemed possible except perpetuation of the *status quo*; today there is an almost endless variety of possibilities.

WHAT ARE the more likely of these possibilities? It is improbable that by the end of this decade the Soviet Union will be a Welfare State on the Scandinavian model or a well-functioning parliamentary democracy. Yet, in the near

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future, a total breakdown is almost equally unlikely. Sensationalist scenarios make for exciting reading but the obvious, even the trivial, usually provides safer guide-lines. In the real world, various stabilisers and retarding factors exist; societies frequently undergo crises, even grave and dangerous crises. They seldom commit suicide.

The years 1987-90 witnessed a growing widening—like the gaping blades of a pair of scissors—between the creative-spiritual-cultural sphere (that is to say, *glasnost*), and the material-economic sphere, (namely, *perestroika*). While *glasnost* made substantial progress, *perestroika* did not; and no gifts of prophecy were needed to realise that this process would not continue indefinitely. Everyone knew that the USSR was heading towards a very difficult period, but there was no unanimity as to how it would face the coming adversities. Informed observers generally agreed that the end of authoritarianism in the Soviet Union was not just around the corner (as some in West and East had claimed in the early euphoric days). But no one could say with any assurance when, how far, and for how long, the political leadership would move once again in the direction of strong-arm politics.

ALTHOUGH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to predict how the Soviet Union will be ruled next year and what the mood of its society will be, one can comment with greater conviction about longer-run political and economic probabilities, whatever the fate of individual leaders may be in the years to come.

One example of this kind of prediction should suffice. It concerns Eugen Richter (1838-1906), leader of the Liberals in the German Parliament during the last quarter of the 19th century, the bane of Bismarck, and an expert on budgetary affairs. In 1891, Richter published a little book, a political fantasy, in which he discussed the consequences of the establishment on German soil of a government on orthodox Marxist lines.[1] It would result, Richter wrote, in mass escapes over the border. First the pensioners would flee, with no great loss to the state. They would be followed by numerous artists and writers; but this too would not greatly disconcert the authorities, because there would be enough writers left to sing the praises of the régime. Many intellectuals, in any case, were destructive elements and no obstacle should be put in their way. But then the exodus of skilled workers would follow—engineers, teachers, physicians. . . . At this stage emigration would be stopped and the greatly strengthened border units would receive their orders: "Shoot to kill!"

This was exactly what happened in East Germany, and the question arises how anyone writing 99 years before the event could possibly have foreseen the course of history. Eugen Richter was not a political philosopher of note or a political science-fiction writer of the rank of H. G. Wells or George Orwell. But he was a man of common sense, and he knew instinctively that unless people had a minimum of freedom they would be unhappy; and if they were unhappy, many would eventually try to escape.

One of the great writers of antiquity wrote that common sense is the best prophet. It is not an infallible approach, but it is more often true than not and there is so far no other method remotely as reliable.

The year 1989 was an *annus mirabilis* in Eastern Europe. First Poland and Hungary, later East Germany and Czechoslovakia, moved to radical reform as the traditional Communist power-structures collapsed. The ending of an era was enthusiastically welcomed by the overwhelming majority of the population. Furthermore, it proceeded without bloodshed (except in Romania). But it was also clear that the collapse of these dictatorships was merely the beginning of a difficult process of transition. All the countries of Eastern Europe confronted economic difficulties, for which no early and easy solutions were in sight. But democratic traditions in Eastern Europe were either feeble or had been suppressed for generations; and although the ruling Communist Parties had become universally unpopular, there was no certainty that the new democratic forces would show sufficient cohesion and determination to collaborate in safeguarding a new order.

Above all, developments in Eastern Europe give no pointer to future trends in the Soviet Union (just as developments in the Soviet Union provide no clue to China). Communism is more deeply rooted in the Soviet Union than in Eastern Europe—it is not a foreign importation. The Russian nationalist opposition to Communism in the Soviet Union is not anti-imperialist, as was nationalist opposition in Eastern Europe, where there is little resistance against introducing a multi-party system and private initiative in the economic sphere. In the Soviet Union, however (with the obvious and understandable exception of the Baltic republics), opposition is strongly entrenched.

Thus the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have moved in different directions, and this has contributed to the general uncertainties. Once "the Brezhnev Doctrine" was abolished, and the countries of Eastern Europe received much greater freedom to shape their own destiny, it could still be taken for granted that as long as there were big powers and small, there would be spheres of influence. Even at a time of internal crisis, the Soviet leadership is unlikely to give up its predominant position in Eastern Europe. Neutrality is within reach for some East European countries, but not affiliation with an alliance of which the Soviet Union disapproves. The Warsaw Pact may disappear or (more likely, perhaps) lose its importance, especially if NATO is reduced in scale and function. This leaves the question of German unity. The Soviet Union will accept a unified Germany, but without enthusiasm—and only on the basis of far-reaching guarantees.

However, the emergence of a united Germany will open new foreign political opportunities for the Soviet Union in a new European order, for it is bound to lead, at the very least, to a weakening of NATO. The Soviet Union will be seen by both Eastern and Western Europe as a counterweight to Germany, and the new balance of power may well lead to realignments thought impossible only yesterday. Nor can it be excluded that if the major European countries opt

[1] Eugen Richter, *Sozialdemokratische Zukunftsbilder* (1891). An English edition appeared in London a few years later.

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for Social Democracy in the 1990s, and if there should be a similar trend inside the Soviet Union (an assumption that can by no means be taken for granted), the idea of "a common European home", or at least a new "Concert of Europe", may become more than a slogan.

Some Soviet commentators have argued that it has been extremely difficult to carry out reforms in their country because the seriousness of the situation was not generally realised. Real change, they say, is bound to come once it is accepted that the nation is on the edge of an abyss. But what kind of change do they have in mind?

Not a few spokesmen maintain that there has been too much experimentation already, and that only a return to the old system where everything was centrally planned—or *seemed* to be centrally planned (the reality was often different)—provides a way out of the dead end. Others have asserted that while the idea of the free market and private initiative is repulsive to many Soviet citizens, it is still possible that a Soviet Charles de Gaulle (a Right-wing leader adopting Left-wing measures) could persuade his countrymen to move forward. But the Soviet Union in 1990 is not France at a time when the war in Algeria seemed to threaten the very existence of the Republic. Just as the Russian Revolution, Stalinism, and the post-Stalin era were unique, comparison with other political régimes and societies is of only limited help in providing clues now that the Communist system no longer works, and no alternative order has as yet emerged.

The rebellions in the non-Russian Republics have come as a shock, and the end has not yet been reached. But would even their defection cause a decisive shift in the balance-of-power? It is not even certain that the seceding states would be viable. And if the Soviet leadership *were* to release, say, Azerbaijan, Lithuania, and Moldavia, it would affect only 1-2% of the area of the Soviet Union, less than 5% of the population, less than 3% of oil production.

In 1917 Russia seemed to be on the verge of total disintegration. Germany in 1945 lost almost half of her territory. Yet within three decades both countries were back among the main players in world politics. In the final analysis the question whether the Soviet Union (or Greater Russia) will remain a world power will be decided in Moscow, in the Kuzbass, the Urals, and in Siberia—not in Baku, Fergana, or Kaunas.

BUT THESE ARE long-term perspectives. The 1990s will certainly be a decade of great turbulence, possibly accompanied by sudden changes in the Soviet leadership. A combination of economic crisis and separatist trends is not conducive to gradual democratisation: in a choice between chaos and tyranny, the majority usually opt for strong leadership. A great deal of fear, confusion, and sullen resentment has accumulated over the years in many sections of the population, in Russia as much as among the nationalities. This could open the door to all kind of political demagoguery—surely *someone* must bear the responsibility for all that has gone wrong? There is a growing demand for purveyors of "stab-in-the-back" theories (as there was in Germany after World War I), and many "saviours of the Fatherland" will be offering their services as the last decade of the century rings in from the towers of the Kremlin. Neither pogroms nor a political-military coup to bring public disorder to an end can be ruled out.

One ought, therefore, to try to look not only beyond Gorbachov's successors but also beyond the successors' successors, however speculative this endeavour may seem. Communism, by and large, has failed—but what are the options now open to Soviet leaders in this post-Communist phase?

Personalities will change (and also, quite probably, their doctrines), the problems facing the Soviet Union will remain more or less the same. Communism as an economic system has not worked; dictatorship has been discredited. But the prospects for a quasi-capitalist economic system are no more brilliant than those for a parliamentary democracy. A "Chinese solution" will not work forever even in China, let alone in more developed countries. Perhaps the Polish experience in the 1980s—military dictatorship as an interlude—points to a possible scenario.

It is impossible to put the clock back indefinitely in the Soviet Union. Neither neo-Leninism, nor a conservative Populism, nor a variety of Fascism hitherto untried, will work. But equally, as long as the majority of the population is not ready for basic innovations, it seems impossible to make a radical break with the past. So the country will sway between various political and economic systems until it finds the one most appropriate for its mood and needs.

The following scenarios all seem possible, and it is quite likely that more than one will be tried in the years to come.

(1) Adoption by the leadership of radical measures in the political and economic field. . . gradual introduction of a multi-party system (of sorts). . . far-reaching concessions to the nationalities (including the right of secession). . . a free hand to farmers in the countryside. . . basic changes in industry and trade. However, there may not be sufficient popular support for policies of this kind, especially where they affect the economy, and large sections of the bureaucracy will certainly try to torpedo them.

The opposition against the Communist Party apparatus as it manifests itself in elections, demonstrations, strikes etc., has not much in common except resentment about the privileges enjoyed by the *nomenklatura*, frustration and anger about the low standard of living, insufficient supplies and the general dismal state of affairs. Some of the leaders of this opposition are populists of the Left, others of the Right; yet others look to Western societies for inspiration. Some are Communists of sorts, others anti-Communists. But no one has a clear idea of how to confront some of the most pressing problems. A multi-party system has in effect existed inside the Communist Party since 1988-89. This state of affairs could continue for a number of years, but sooner or later a split is likely to occur along the same lines (conservatives, reformists, radicals). The drift away from Leninism will continue, other parties will be social democratic or non-socialist. There may be regional and ethnic blocs as in the old Czarist *Duma*, a peasant party, Left-wing and Right-wing ecologists, Siberia-firsters, and perhaps even single issue pressure groups, be it abstinence or anti-Semitism. In view of the absence of a democratic tradition and the likeli-

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hood that no Soviet government will be able to make substantial progress within the next few years, an anti-democratic backlash seems likely at some future date.

The difficulties facing most East European countries during transition to a multi-party system, with the sprouting of dozens of national and regional groups, are indicative of the troubles that will confront the Soviet Union in the years to come. Given the absence of a democratic tradition, the polarisation of public opinion, and the worsening economic situation, the prospects of Western-style democracy in the Soviet Union cannot be rated highly. The most that can reasonably be hoped for is a Presidential régime with certain democratic features, in which the powers of decision are still concentrated in the hands of the President, who will work through the state bureaucracy.

(2) The emergence of a new centrist leadership from among the Politburo—either a single leader or a collective leadership, using slogans such as "No More Experiments", "Normalisation", "Confidence Should Be Restored to the People". The new leaders would be middle-of-the-roaders, who could appear with equal ease to be "reformers" or "conservatives", according to the circumstances. Their main desire would be to gain time. But I think such neo-Brezhnevism could be at best a temporary expedient.

(3) A military dictatorship under populist auspices, such as "Workers-and-Peasants Rule (without the Communist Party)", headed by a Committee of National Salvation. The Army commanders would have the support of sections of the Party leadership and the *KGB*. But the Army would appear as a central force because of its prestige, despite the setbacks of recent years. ("Only the Army can save us from the brink of the abyss.")

Any such scenario, however, rests on two preconditions which cannot necessarily be taken for granted—the unity of the Army command and the willingness of soldiers, if given the order, to shoot their fellow citizens. Even if the Army were initially united in its readiness to act, subsequent disputes among the military leadership, with various coups and counter-coups, cannot be ruled out. Suppression of popular unrest by force of arms is a dangerous weapon. Once orders are not obeyed, the whole edifice collapses; and then there is no longer a military option, only the threat of civil war.

(4) Several variations can be envisaged on the basis of a Military Dictatorship scenario. By necessity it would be Russian-Nationalist, and Populist. It could cling to as much of the Empire as possible. Or it could opt for a "Great Russian" solution, letting the ingrate nationalities leave the Union, provided guarantees for Soviet Security interests were given.

The weakness of this scenario is that a régime such as this has no answer to the basic economic and social problems besetting the USSR. On D-Day plus-One, apathy would return. Within a short time the country would be worse off than before.

(5) A "Kemalist", developmental dictatorship aimed at leading the country gradually towards democratic institutions and basic economic change by means of "a revolution from above". This is similar in perspective to the first scenario. But many Soviet observers believe that it is too late for a solution of this kind, which might have stood a good chance during the years after Joseph Stalin's death.

(6) Other developments—such as the sudden emergence of a charismatic leader—are always possible, but are less likely. For the time being, power at the centre is sufficiently strong to suppress civil war. But this is based on the assumption that the general disintegration will not continue. If the centre is further weakened—if the shortages, the general decay, the loss of confidence should proceed further—then civil war or, more likely, an old-fashioned Russian *bunt* becomes a possibility. (A *bunt* is a popular revolt, destructive, essentially anarchic, lacking any clear aim—an explosion of pent-up anger.) But even a civil war or a *bunt* will not last for ever; sooner or later centripetal forces will assert themselves, and out of the purgatory a new Russia may emerge.

IT SEEMS TO ME most likely that eventually the reform initiatives undertaken in 1985-1990 will be resumed—more thoroughly, more clearly thought out, and more radically. But no one can say for certain how long the detours may last, and how much damage will be caused in between.

The most popular and talked-about figure in the Soviet Union, but also the most controversial, as the 1990s began, was neither Mikhail Gorbachov nor any of his opponents to the Left or the Right (Messrs Yeltsin and Ligachev), but a certain Dr Kashpirovsky. This Russian television personality claimed, in his frequent appearances, to cure—by hypnosis—drug addiction and alcoholism, and to make intolerable pain decrease in intensity, or even disappear altogether. Many millions accepted his claims. Most physicians (and many others) were unconvinced. But the phenomenon of Dr Kashpirovsky preoccupied public opinion. There is a strong tradition of belief in miracle-cures in Russia—stronger, perhaps, than in other parts of the world.

How strong, then, is belief in a political and economic "Kashpirovsky cure"—swift, radical, and above all painless? Long and bitter experience should have taught the Soviet people that there are no miracle-cures in politics and even fewer in the economy, and I am convinced that a healthy scepticism is indeed ingrained among them. On the other hand, wide sections of the population have been exposed to campaigns of disorientation over many years. The graver the situation, the greater the temptation to follow false prophets.

Much will depend in the years to come on the maturity of Soviet citizens facing adversity. And it is precisely at this point, with psychological rather than "objective" factors likely to decide the struggle, that it becomes most difficult to predict the outcome.

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Don Bloch

A Meeting of Minds

MIM SPANIER'S primary motive for wanting to sleep with Collings was curiosity. That's what she told herself. Not about the act, either, but about her feelings afterwards. She couldn't pretend that what she felt for the man amounted to passion, although she was reasonably sure she would enjoy herself. Collings had a reputation. More especially, what preyed on Mim's mind was whether letting a man she admired make love to her would mean any fundamental change in their relations.

When finally they got together, things did not go as she'd expected. But then did they ever? Room 311 at the Ramada Inn on Huntington Avenue had a view of the parking lot, three-quarters empty in the middle of the day. It was a blue room. The air inside was stale, the sheets stiff with detergent.

"I checked the paper. There should be Haydn." Mim fiddled for all she was worth, but still could only raise static on the console radio. "I'm sorry."

When Collings rolled on to his back and started to study the plaster ceiling, Mim's toes began to curl. She was very self-conscious about his erection. He was like a sundial.

"I want to know you better first", Collings said, looking at her at last. "Do you mind?" Tears were brimming in his eyes. Helen could reach out and touch his wheelchair beside the bed. Who was taking advantage of whom? That was the question. With the fingers of one hand she played spider with the spokes of a wheel.

"Mind, no. I am a little surprised."

The work they had brought with them lay on the plastic dressing-table against the far wall. Her briefcase side by side with his, a few papers spilling out. His mighty bunch of keys. Helen had helped Collings undress after he had first methodically, in silence, removed all her clothes. He kissed each new area of her body revealed to him. A kiss of identification, a moist labelling. There had never been such a long period without words between them. Traffic on the street, footsteps in the corridor, some late riser through the wall sneezing—all the sounds of the world were sad.

Mim sat up in bed and in prim imitation of a little girl smoothed the counterpane. Collings had a large, flaccid body, his head a miracle of bold carving. "How much better?" she was tempted to ask. Instead she decided on seduction. She reached out her hand. "Can you feel that?"

Collings took her hand away gently, kissed the fingertips. Side by side they sat, staring in front of them, Collings smoking a cigar. When he put it out, Helen began to giggle.

"What?" Collings asked, laughing. "What is it?" She tucked into him, hair scratching his cheek and neck, her lips brushing his chest, her whole graceful body curled now, shaking with laughter.

"Think what the papers would make of this", Mim gasped. "The scandal. One more argument against bussing. And it's so"—there was a sudden hard edge to Mim's voice which killed Collings's smile—"goddamn innocent."

Usually when they were together they talked about their children and the world of the future. A world they would never live to see. Better, safer, kindlier. Collings had a son and daughter by a former marriage, before his accident. They were slightly older and wilder than Mim's two boys. It was one way to keep each other at a distance really, a kind of crossing of swords. Or there was their work. Details, tactics. Now that they wished for intimacy, however, and were bumbling in that direction, there was nothing to talk about. They drifted into a near sleep, submerging in the room's blueness. Neither was confident whether pressure from a hand or cheek, a shadowy caress, was intentional or not. Then Collings sighed and shifted on to his side and trailed a large hand between her legs. She felt as if he could pick her up with one finger. Collings's eyes were closed. Hers were close to his and open.

Irving, Mim's husband, intruded into her thoughts so that her heart moved violently inside her like an empty swing. "Time to get up", she told Collings, and went to dress in the bathroom. How could Irving disapprove? "I'd hate to have that man for an enemy." The last time Collings had come to dinner, that's what Irving had said as soon as the door closed behind him. "Poor devil." Collings. Did it make sense to go to bed with a man because you admired him—and you were afraid giving your body was the only way he would believe that? Now look what had happened.

MIM SHOWERED briefly. It seemed a shame not to use any of the nice thick towels. And she wanted to be alone a while longer with her body. As the possibility of making love receded, Mim's desire increased, send-

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ing her up on her toes. When she bared her teeth to the shower spray, she thought she heard the telephone. The whole time she dried herself off, and later, adjusting her clothes, shoes last of all, Mim avoided herself in the wall-size mirror above the double sink. The image—so happy—might not be familiar.

"Collings?" Mim found the crusader for black rights naked in his wheelchair, peering down through a part in the curtains into the parking lot below. His face was grim. Mim remembered with a pang how she had been so sure his face would look different in the act of love. The rock would dissolve, soften, turn childish even. Without talking, Mim handed Collings his shirt, which needed laundering. She dressed the bottom half of Collings's body, breathing hard from the effort. There were name-tags sewed inside his socks. They belonged to his son.

"I'm being threatened", he said, and smoothed her hair gently with one hand. "Phone calls. My watch, please." When Mim handed him his watch, he pulled her towards him and buried his face in her stomach. He grabbed at her breasts, cupped her buttocks and pressed. Through her skirt, her slip and pants his breath was hot and spread, liquefying her. Then his humped shoulders began to shake. He looked up and to her surprise Mim saw the buffalo was laughing.

"And it's so goddamn innocent!" he said, and they kissed, laughing.

The Lucubration

Rain drums our iron roof, beats
retreat down the dark coast, night
like black ash presses us prone
as relics from death's dreamworld,
rasping dry lyrics from life . . .
A third asleep! Ten years in
our marriage-bed's bas relief,

limbs flying in a fresco of
mock youth, grey hair awry. . . You
tense in that paleolithic world
which made us (Lives unchanging
as birdsong through millennial
seasons of the boundless self.)
waiting amongst the sleeping

tribe by the Horn Gates for truth's
crazy dance: prophecies of
plague! Clues of the calculus!
Futures in babies' organs!
Drought in Egypt! A round Earth!
Asclepius, god of the sick,
do we still owe Socrates'

cock? His daemon, not reason's
constraint, let him swallow
Philosophy's accolade:
it haunts our footnotes to him
unacknowledged — except for
sceptics' immoderation,
claims that the rational is real

estate. . . The house creaks. Sea winds
stoop on the Peninsula. . . .
Dissatisfied man under
smug stars, grandfather, I fear
for love's trusting innocence
in futures media-bland where
all the world's a stage; actors

are titular talking heads
of state; politics porcine;
wars prime-timed, edited, glossed;
transnationals' interest
screened by cartoon, sport, news with
shots of non-consumers' deaths . . . and
consciousness's intermittent. . .

The Angel of the Lord lights
in the garden to explain
the morphology of chance:
the moon fits the eclipsed sun
by shrinking as she climbs, coy
maiden to her marriage-bed,
mind dark with coincidence.

Selwyn Pritchard

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David Stove

The Diabolical Place

A Secret of the Enlightenment

IT WAS ALWAYS obvious enough what the main axioms of the Enlightenment were. They were secularism, egalitarianism, and the utilitarian axiom that the test of morality is the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Many of the theorems, too, which evidently followed from one or more of those axioms, were well-recognised all along: such theorems as republicanism and anti-clericalism. Certain other theorems, for example universal suffrage, took a long time to be recognised as theorems of the Enlightenment, even by the enlightened themselves. But there was one theorem which the enlightened, though they recognised that it followed from their axioms, felt obliged to keep secret from the public for more than 150 years, and which remained almost unmentionable until the lifetime of many people who are still living today.

The theorem I mean had no name, but we now call it contraception; and I can best begin the story of this secret theorem by pointing out that the word is a 20th-century neologism. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary,* it dates only from the year 1917. Likewise its synonym "birth-control", which was at first more popular, dates only from 1914. Do not these dates themselves speak volumes? Imagine if there had been no such word as "equality", or "republic", until 1914! But contraception, though its derivation from the axioms is not as obvious as that of some other theorems, was an Enlightenment theorem all along.

Secularism condemns marriage-vows, along with all other vows, oaths, and promises, as being relics of superstition. The greatest-happiness axiom condemns clerical (and almost any other) celibacy. For these reasons, the Enlightenment had always promised an immense future increase in sexual gratification. But universal sexual emancipation, on its own, would be sure to have an effect directly contrary to "the greatest happiness": namely, too many hungry or unhealthy or neglected children.

There are only four possible ways of preventing that result: infanticide; abortion; sexual abstinence; and contraception. The first three are condemned, again, by the greatest-happiness axiom. But that axiom does not condemn contraception. When you are comparing amounts of happiness, you have to take into account future people as well as present ones; but you do not have to take into account merely *possible* future people. *Ergo*, contraception is what Enlightenment prescribes.

At least as early as Condorcet, the leaders of the Enlightenment saw this derivation perfectly clearly, even if not all their followers did. They simply took care to say nothing about it in their books. Even in Condorcet's last book, *Progrès de l'Esprit Humain* (1795), which he knew would be published only after his death if at all, his closest approach to the subject of contraception is as follows. In the future:

> ". . . men will know that, if they have a duty towards those who are not yet born, it is not to give them existence but to give them happiness; their aim should be to promote the general welfare of the human race . . . rather than foolishly to encumber the world with useless and wretched beings."[1]

Surely this is a very indistinct way of recommending contraception to one's readers? It could equally well be a recommendation of abortion, or infanticide, or sexual abstinence. Thousands of people must have read this passage without realising what it meant—I know I did, more than once. But it was a different story in some of the manuscripts which Condorcet left unpublished at his death. Here he was as explicit and copious about contraception as he had been cryptic and brief in print. He discusses the philosophy, the history, the current technology, and the future social effects of contraception. One such effect, he says, will be to reduce sexual dissoluteness in general, and marital infidelity in particular.[2]

CONDORCET'S ENGLISH DISCIPLE William Godwin was even more circumspect: there is no allusion, however faint, to contraception in the almost-800 pages of his utopian tract *Political Justice* (1793). In part, this was from pure eccentricity. When it was objected that excessive population would ruin his future utopia, Godwin was unconcerned, and one reason was this: he believed that once people became

[1] A.-N. de Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (tr. Barraclough, 1955), p. 189.

[2] See Frank E. Manuel. *The Prophets of Paris* (1965), pp. 88-89.

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thoroughly reasonable (as in 1793 they *were* rapidly becoming, especially in France), they would lose all interest in sex.[3] This novel "short way" with worries about population was justly ridiculed by Malthus,[4] but it is unlikely to have been the main reason for Godwin's equanimity about the population of utopia. It is morally certain that the Godwin-Wollstonecraft-Shelley circle practised contraception themselves: otherwise Shelley's travelling sex-circus, which even as it was took several hours to pass a given point, would have stretched from Land's End to John o' Groats. It is therefore probable that it was contraception, rather than sexual indifference, which they really expected to protect their future utopia from the pressure of population.

IN 1798 ALONG CAME Parson Malthus (as Cobbett called him), with his sights firmly trained on Godwin, Condorcet, and the rest of the utopian-revolutionary tribe. He knew, of course, as all educated people did, of the widespread practice of contraception. But he *was,* after all, a conscientious Anglican clergyman, and it simply never occurred to Malthus to consider contraception in any other light than as one of several vicious "preventive checks to population". ("Preventive" checks he contrasted with "positive" ones, such as war, famine, and disease.) He more than once discusses infanticide—and (in the later edition of the *Essay on Population*) "moral restraint"—as checks to population. But he never discussed either contraception or abortion. In Malthus's mind, those two things simply fell under the heading of "improper arts" (as he called them) for limiting population, and he said as little as he could about subjects so repugnant.

His *Essay* was a political tract, but it succeeded in doing what political tracts hardly ever do: it actually changed the minds of very many of its readers. It even changed many people's politics, but there was a far greater number still of people whom it convinced of the following proposition: that human population, at any rate among the poor, always increases up to the limit permitted by the available supply of food.

But this proposition is, of course, only a factual or scientific one, even if it is true. What *practical* conclusion is to be drawn from it is a different question. The conclusion which Malthus drew from it, and expected everyone else to draw too, was simply this: that the poor should marry late.

Among the people whom Malthus convinced of his factual proposition, however, were the contemporary British leaders of the Enlightenment: the utilitarian philosophers Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, and their numerous and influential followers. And all these people, naturally enough, drew from that same proposition a practical conclusion very different from Malthus's: namely, that the poor should be taught the necessity, and the methods, of contraception.

This group of people soon came to be called "neo-Malthusians": a name which naturally (and rightly) distressed Malthus. Nor did the name assist the popularity of those to whom it was applied. Among those who knew him personally, Malthus was an exceptionally well-liked man. But his book was exactly the reverse, and it has been truly said that by the 1820s his name in any form had been "spitten upon by almost every decent and religious-minded man or woman in the country",[5] as being a cloak for indecency, or for reaction, or both.

But the neo-Malthusians had another public-relations problem, even more serious than that of their name: for while they were convinced of the urgent necessity of contraception, they were too frightened to say so in public. They considered themselves already embattled enough, simply as being utilitarians, and therefore suspected (rightly) of republicanism, irreligion, etc. For them to advocate and teach contraception in public would have meant incomparably greater odium still. There had been no precedent for such an enormity in fifteen Christian centuries, not even among the wildest men of the French Revolution; and the neo-Malthusian thinkers were hardly the people to break such a silence.

Their master, Jeremy Bentham, was a timid, rich, scholarly recluse. He would (and did) draft on request a new Constitution for Mexico, or wherever; but the stormy waters of home politics were entirely out of his line, even on subjects which were mentionable. James Mill was not rich, and had had to struggle for decades to get his respectable job at the East India Company, which he would have instantly lost if he had openly advocated contraception. Was their disciple George Grote, a city banker, to ruin himself and his bank by such advocacy? Was Sir Francis Burdett, whose life was devoted to proving that you could be respectable though a Radical, to forfeit his seat in the House of Commons (as another MP actually did) by an injudicious speech in favour of contraception? Were factory girls to be lectured on the prevention of conception by that "very ladylike person" (as someone rightly called him), John Stuart Mill?

NO: SUCH THINGS WERE completely out of the question. The most that the leaders of neo-Malthusianism dared to do was to publish occasional, brief, and obscure hints in favour of contraception, like the one I quoted above from Condorcet. Thus James Mill, for example, in an article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1820, wrote that a solution to the problem of pauperism would not be hard to find, "if the superstitions of the nursery were discarded, and the principle of utility kept steadily in view"[6]—which must be admitted to be a sufficiently guarded way of recommending contraception. Even his son, John Stuart Mill, although the subject of population never ceased to weigh on his mind from the time he first read Malthus, contented himself in print with saying things like the following: that the future happiness of the mass of mankind depended upon the "labouring population [practising] a voluntary restriction of the increase of their

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[3] William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (ed. Kramnitz, 1976), p. 776.

[4] See T. R. Malthus, *First Essay on Population* (a facsimile reprint by Macmillan, 1966, of the first edition of the *Essay on the Principle of Population*), pp. 210-18.

[5] Graham Wallas, *The Life of Francis Place* (2nd edn., 1918), p. 169.

[6] This quotation is drawn from Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (tr. Morris, 1934), p. 364.

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numbers . . . ."[7] With *that* minimal utterance, of course, Malthus himself would have entirely agreed. Yet it was as far as J. S. Mill ever dared to go in public.

So, as one of the neo-Malthusians, Richard Carlile, wrote in 1824, there was

> ". . . in London . . . a sort of class, or society, or connection of persons, composed of Physicians, Literati, Political Economists, Members of Parliament, with men and women in the first rank in point of fortunes and titles, so convinced of a redundancy of population as to recommend a means of preventing conception on copulation. The practice, though new to England, they say, is not new to Europe. . . . This anti-conception scheme was communicated to me about two years since by a friend."

Carlile says that he had at first argued at length against his friend's scheme, and he continues as follows:

> "But after all that can be said between ourselves, as friends, who is the man that dares to broach the subject to the public? I confess that I dare not . . . *my friend answered that he dared to* do it! Aye, and now tells me that he *is* doing it to good purpose."[8]

Richard Carlile was certainly not a man afraid to publish unpopular opinions. In fact he spent, at different times, a total of nine years in prison, on account of publishing anti-religious writings. There is a tradition, admittedly, that he actually preferred prison to the company of his elderly wife; still, he was clearly a man of courage. Yet the subject of contraception seemed, even to him, to be unmentionable in public. Who then was his friend who *did* dare to break the silence?

IT WAS FRANCIS PLACE, who was born in 1771 and died in 1854. Unlike the neo-Malthusian leaders, he was not paralysed by respectability: he was not rich, a gentleman, an MP or even a thinker. Originally one of the London poor, he had built up a substantial tailoring business; and then, in middle life, he got his first real education by attaching himself to Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. Politics was Place's life-long consuming interest. He never became one of the Owenites—or "socialists" as they soon began to be called—but he was always fervidly republican, democratic, and anti-religious. And as a political organiser he turned out to be a genius. The Reform Bill of 1832, the People's Charter of 1839, the repeal of the laws against "combinations" of working men—Place was a key figure in all of these, and a thousand other similar things. For 40 years, he played the political system of Britain, in the Radical interest, the way Paganini played the fiddle.

On one subject, though only one, Place was a fanatic: population. Malthus, he never tired of repeating, had been right when he said that the only way to relieve the misery of labouring men was to raise the price of their labour by reducing the supply of it: that is, by labouring men having fewer children. But whereas Malthus had concluded from this that labouring men should marry late, Place regarded that advice as being both impracticable and immoral. His own advice to labouring men was to marry early if they liked, but then to practise contraception.

This advice was included in a book about Malthus's ideas which he published in 1822. But in that form, Place realised, his advice was unlikely to reach the people for whom it was intended. So he soon afterwards arranged for the distribution, in the streets of London, of many copies of a handbill, which gave concrete instructions about how to prevent conception. He expanded this handbill into an article which was published anonymously in Carlile's magazine, *The Republican*, in 1825. The best method of contraception, according to this article, is "a piece of sponge, about an inch square, being placed in the vagina previous to coition, and afterwards withdrawn by means of a double twisted thread, or bobbin, attached to it. . . ."[9]

These publications produced a violent reaction, but it was not a public outcry: the shock went rather too deep for that. You could better call it an incry: a silent spasm of pain which ran through the country. Someone described Francis Place's handbill as "diabolical", and this word caught on, and stuck to the handbills and to Place; no doubt because it accurately expressed what most decent people felt about such publications.

It must be understood that Place had not done anything illegal. It was not illegal in Britain then (or since) to advocate contraception, or to instruct people in it; still less, of course, was it illegal to practise it. But this was a world, after all, in which Jane Austen had been dead for only five or six years, and what Place had done was felt to be far worse than anything illegal: it was felt to be—well, diabolical.

Are you inclined to smile at that feeling? Well, it is not illegal now (say) to urinate on your parents' graves or to collect photographs of your daughter's face and stick pins through the eyes. These things, and innumerable others, are not forbidden, either, by the principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. But what would be our feelings towards someone who did them?

FRANCIS PLACE'S PUBLICATIONS seem actually to have left the subject of contraception even more unmentionable than it had been before. At any rate, another 50 years passed before anyone else did anything comparably aggressive. There were in that period, indeed, a few publications which advocated and taught contraception. For example, *Moral Physiology* (1831) by R. D. Owen; a pamphlet, *The Fruits of Philosophy* (1832), by a Dr Charles Knowlton of Massachusetts; and *An Essay on Scientific Propagation* (about 1873) by J. H. Noyes. Such publications

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[7] This is from his *Autobiography*, but I have drawn the quotation from Halévy, p. 365.

[8] This quotation is taken from Marie Stopes's book, *Contraception: Its Theory, History and Practice* (2nd edn., 1927), p. 314. But Stopes does not make clear whether she is here quoting from an article, a letter, or what.

[9] Marie Stopes, *Contraception* . . . , pp. 317-18.

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must have had some effect on people's practice, but they had little tendency to make contraception more publicly mentionable than it had been before; if anything, they had the opposite effect. Nor is this surprising, when you consider who their authors were.

Robert Dale Owen was a son of *the* Robert Owen, first of the breed of socialist millionaires which has multiplied like rabbits ever since, who exhausted the patience of England, Europe, and America by his endless plunges from one scheme of secular salvation to another. And R. D. was his father's son, except that he had received an education: a trifling difference when set against the messianic character which he shared with his father. J. H. Noyes was the founder and director of the well-known Oneida Community in New York State, where private property was abolished, all the women were married to all the men, and stringent eugenic policies were enforced. Contraception was simply another inevitable part of Noyes's communist system.

Unlike those two, Dr Charles Knowlton of Massachusetts is not otherwise known to fame, but his pamphlet supplied the fuel for the next explosion, in 1876. A Bristol bookseller had re-issued this pamphlet, adorned by some indecent pictures of his own choosing, and as a result had been imprisoned for publishing an obscene libel. In London, Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh were then on fire with the Placean combination of philanthropy and hatred of religion, and they saw their chance. They edited and re-published Knowlton's pamphlet themselves (minus the offending pictures), offered it for sale, and informed the police of what they were doing. They were duly prosecuted and found guilty; but on appeal, because of a defect in the indictment, their convictions were set aside.

This trial attracted great public attention, and it certainly sold very many copies of the pamphlet. It has often been represented as a great victory for contraception; some people have even attributed to it a decline in the British birth rate which began at about the same time. But as far as I can discover it was no propaganda triumph, rather the reverse. The defendants seemed to have antagonised virtually everyone, including many people whom they hoped to find, or to make, their allies. There was one especially telling instance of this.

They had tried, first by subpoena and then by request, to get Charles Darwin to appear in court in their defence. No doubt they knew that the least public countenance from *him* would ensure a famous victory for contraception. They may also have calculated that the grandson of Erasmus Darwin (the friend of Joseph Priestley and of other English friends of the French Revolution) would not be able to resist coming to the aid of embattled Enlightenment. If they did, they calculated wrong.

Charles Darwin was not an impolite man, but he gave Annie Besant and Bradlaugh a very brutal brush-off. He was opposed, he told them, not merely to advocacy of contraception, but to the thing itself. As Besant later reported:

> "Darwin disagreed with preventive checks to population, on the ground that over-multiplication was useful, since it caused a struggle for existence in which only the strongest and the ablest survived, and that he doubted whether it was possible for preventive checks to serve as well as positive. . . ."[10]

Nor was this a case of Darwin rationalising the distaste which he evidently felt for the defendants: he had expressed the same thought in print some years before—not indeed so brutally, but clearly enough—in *The Descent of Man*.[11]

This, then, was the reception that Besant and Bradlaugh met with from the very embodiment and idol of European Enlightenment. We may judge from it how warmly they were received in less-enlightened circles. In 1876, if Darwin was against you, who that mattered could be for you?

THE TRIAL OF Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant actually seems, like Francis Place's irruption long before, to have made contraception an even more unmentionable subject than it had previously been. At any rate, it is quite certain that the silence surrounding contraception was deeper in the last quarter of the 19th century than it had been in the first.

Anyone who doubs this should consult biographies of the contraceptionists which were published late in that century, and *The Dictionary of National Biography*. For example, *The Life of Francis Place* was published in 1898 by Graham Wallas, Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics. It is quite a good book, except that it brazenly shirks the whole subject of contraception. Only four of its almost 400 pages are devoted to Place's "neo-Malthusianism", and no reader of those pages would have the faintest idea of what Graham Wallas was talking about, if he did not know from other sources. (I know, because I was such a reader when I first read them.)

Now, this silence about contraception could no more have happened in a biography of Francis Place published 50 years before 1898, than it could have been in one published 50 years after that. But there is an even more remarkable silence in the biography of Charles Bradlaugh which was published by his devoted daughter Hypatia in 1894. For she actually manages to give an account of the Bradlaugh-Besant trial, less than twenty years before, which avoids disclosing to the reader what the trial had been about.[12]

The Dictionary of National Biography, in its original form, was in 26 stout volumes, which carried British biography up to 1911, and began to appear in 1885. It was the achievement of Leslie Stephen more than of any other one person, and is a work which it would be impertinent merely to praise: it is simply one of the most valuable books of reference in existence. It displays, however, certain systematic faults of omission, and one of these (which has not, I think, been pointed out before) is this: the secrecy which had

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[10] This is a quotation from Besant's *Autobiographical Sketches* (1885), given by J. M. Robertson, *A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century* (1929: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1969), p. 337.

[11] See Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (1874), vol. I, p. 219 of the second edition.

[12] Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner, *Charles Bradlaugh* (1894), vol. II, ch. 3.

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always surrounded the subject of contraception is here carried far beyond all previous limits. No one could ever learn from the *DNB* that such a thing as contraception existed, much less learn that it was a subject of importance to the nation, and to many of the men and women whose lives the *Dictionary* records.

Anyone can easily verify this by reading the articles on (for example) Francis Place, Richard Carlile, and Charles Bradlaugh. It is impossible to read these articles without astonishment at the ease with which editors can simply abolish even the most enormous and notorious historical facts; or without indignation at the thoroughness with which this abolition has here been carried out on the subject of contraception.

The secret which the *DNB* kept so well was kept even better, on the whole, in the USA than in Britain. In the early years of the 20th century, Margaret Sanger (1883-1966), the pioneer of contraception in America, sometimes worked as a nurse in the New York slums, attending many women worn out by too many babies and abortions. According to her autobiography, she was not at the time much less ignorant than the mothers she tried to help, but these poor people repeatedly implored her to tell them, or sell them—these were their own terrible words—"*the secret rich people had.*"[13]

OF COURSE, WE ALL KNOW how hostile the Victorian age was to the publication of sexual details in any form. Nor was there any sudden change in this respect when Queen Victoria died in 1901. And yet the first contraception clinic opened in London in 1921! In a few years more, the triumph of contraception was complete and public. The Enlightenment secret was out at last.

So great and rapid a revolution in feeling and behaviour cries out for explanation. What was it that enabled the contraception movement, previously so successfully repressed for so long, to enjoy its sudden and complete triumph early in our century? I do not pretend to be able to answer this question fully. But it is easy to answer it partly, by recalling an aspect of this revolution which is at present virtually forgotten.

Nowadays, contraception is nowhere concealed, and it is practised virtually everywhere. Yet even now it has not been acknowledged as a part of Enlightenment, except sometimes in communist or socialist countries. In free countries it has never even been enjoined on the citizens as a duty, let alone made compulsory; whereas in China at present, for example, if a couple have one child, any second pregnancy *must* be prevented or terminated. Among us, everyone now does what for centuries before only the middle and upper classes did: practise contraception, either from a prudent regard for the number of their dependents, or from a desire to enhance their own sexual opportunities. Contraception among us, in short, is entirely self-regarding, and not at all ideological.

It was not so in the early part of this century. When Marie Stopes in Britain and Margaret Sanger in America "broke the sound barrier" at about the time of World War I, their movement was strongly ideological. Of course, the desire of working-class women to suffer less from unwanted pregnancies was an essential causal factor in the revolution; so was the sympathy of their middle-class patronesses. But then, both of *those* factors had been present for a very long time, without producing any revolution in feeling and behaviour. A desire to lessen the burdens imposed on poor women by too many babies or abortions is not quite the stuff of which a revolution can be made. To effect a revolution, some much more widespread and urgent emotion must be called on: you need a strong ideological wind in your sails. And contraception did get such a wind in its sails early in this century, though it had not had it before, and did not keep it for very long afterwards.

It was not an *Enlightenment* wind, however, or one which would be found congenial at the present day by most of the beneficiaries of contraception. For it was a *eugenic* wind, and more specifically a *racial*-eugenic one.

MARIE STOPES and Margaret Sanger achieved the first and most urgent of their movement's goals: relief for women, especially poor ones, from excessive child-bearing. But all the while they were riding the eugenic tiger, which had other and bigger goals in view than the relief of poor mothers. The contraceptionists and their beneficiaries got away unscathed, once *their* goal had been reached: and they proceeded to forget all about the tiger, and about how much of their success had been owing to it. There were certain other people, though, who were less fortunate, and not allowed to forget: most notably, European Jews.

The eugenics movement had been begun in the 1880s by Darwin's cousin and friend, Sir Francis Galton, who also coined the word "Eugenics". The movement was later carried on under the energetic leadership of the biologist and statistician Professor Karl Pearson. In theory, the movement was as much concerned with "positive" eugenics—that is, breeding better people (or more of them)—as it was with "negative" eugenics: breeding less of the worse. But in practice, naturally enough, it was negative eugenics which soon assumed overwhelming importance in the Eugenists' eyes. For the unemployable, the mentally defective, the carriers of hereditary disease, and the racially inferior displayed an apparently irresistible tendency to outbreed their betters. It was this which terrified the Eugenists; and the terror which they felt at it, and which they communicated to all Europe and America, made their movement a powerful one.

At first, eugenics and contraception were movements entirely independent of one another. Contraception was still unmentionable when eugenics began; and conversely Bradlaugh, for example, who was still an enthusiast for contraception when he died in 1891, appears hardly to have heard of eugenics.

The two movements did not at first find one another personally congenial, either. The Eugenists were respectable people (to say the least), while the Contraceptionists were not; the latter were feminists, the former anti-feminist; and so on. Still, a confluence of the two movements took place,

[13] Margaret Sanger, *An Autobiography* (first published in 1938; Marshall Reprint Co., 1970), pp. 374-75.

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somewhere between 1900 and 1920, and it is easy in retrospect to see that they were "made for each other". Contraception held out to the Eugenists what, to their enormous frustration, they had previously been denied: the prospect of putting their policies into practice on a nation-wide scale. And, contrariwise, eugenics gave the Contraceptionists what they had always previously lacked: a cause which far transcended the misery of working-class mothers, and one with a widespread and urgent emotion behind it.

THUS THE MOVEMENT FOR *fewer* children became a movement for *better* ones, and for racially better ones in particular. The Eugenists, overcoming some distaste, took contraception on board. The Contraceptionists, like most people, had no distaste for eugenics to overcome, and they greedily embraced their new, powerful, and respectable ally. This embrace cannot be adequately documented here, but it is written everywhere in the literature of contraception in the first 40 years of our century. It could easily be illustrated by quotations from George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, John Maynard Keynes, and a dozen others. But it will be better if I give a few representative passages from the pioneer Contraceptionists themselves. The first of the following passages is from Margaret Sanger, the other two are from the *magnum opus* of Marie Stopes, *Contraception*.

> "The eugenists wanted to shift the birth-control emphasis from less children for the poor to more children for the rich. We went back of that and sought first to stop the multiplication of the unfit. This appeared the most important and greatest step towards race betterment."

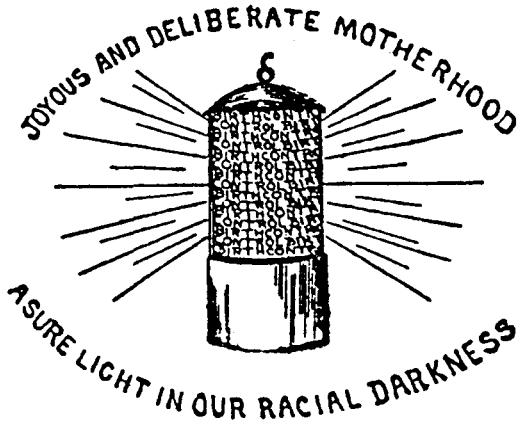
Stopes writes of

> ". . . the urgent racial problem of dealing with those who from every national point of view ought not to produce the unhealthy and degenerate infants which they are now producing, and who therefore should be sterilised."

She also quotes, with complete approval, Havelock Ellis saying that contraceptive practices

> ". . . as carried on at present . . . may even be dysgenic rather than eugenic, for they tend to be adopted by the superior stocks, while the inferior stocks, ignorant and reckless, are left to propagate freely. This unfortunate result is encouraged by the notorious failure—still so conspicuous amongst us—to spread the knowledge of contraceptives among the classes which from the eugenic standpoint most urgently need them".[14]

Then, at the end of the text of her book, Stopes published the eloquent little drawing, reproduced below, which also appeared on all the writing-paper at her first clinic. It is here slightly enlarged, in a (not particularly successful) attempt to make the words in the middle—"BIRTH CONTROL"—legible.



When the Contraceptionists spoke of racial degeneracy, racial betterment, and the like, it is sometimes clear from the context that what they were referring to was the human race as a whole. But, at least equally often, it is equally clear that what they had in mind was something like "the Anglo-Saxon race". In their writings, they seldom (perhaps never) got right down to details concerning the "fitness" of other races: the intelligence of Negroes, for example. But this omission hardly mattered: their eugenist allies were in most cases more than willing to supply such details.

Egalitarianism, as I said at the beginning, was an axiom of the Enlightenment. But if human beings are in themselves all equal, it follows that the inequalities and other differences which we actually find among them must all be due to external causes: to variable accidents, such as their social position, education, wealth, and so on.

"*The Characters of Men Originate in their External Circumstances*", as Godwin headed one of his chapters—and as the Enlightened, both before and after him, never tired of repeating. Call this Enlightenment theorem "externalism". From externalism, along with the undeniable fact that *past* education, past forms of government, etc., were such as to leave indefinite room for improvement, a further theorem follows: that all that is needed to bring about indefinite future improvement in human beings is improvement in their education, forms of government, well-meaning rules and regulations, and so on. This is the Enlightenment theorem of "perfectibilism", as they used to call it; but I will call it "educationism", since that name seems to me both more expressive and less embarrassing.

THE EGALITARIAN axiom, and its theorems of externalism and educationism, are all obviously false, and always were so. Or rather, to speak plainly, they are and always were simply ridiculous. How could any sane parent of two or more children ever have believed that all children possess equal native endowments of mind and body? Or that they will all respond in the same way to the same external circumstances? But then Enlightenment (as we know) is unfriendly towards large families, and is easily dissuaded from parenthood altogether. In Britain, for example, the grand total of children produced

[14] Marie Stopes, *Contraception*, pp. 445, 7. The article by Havelock Ellis which Stopes is quoting had appeared in *Eugenics Review*, April 1917.

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by Newton, Locke, Hume, Adam Smith, Gibbon, Bentham, J. S. Mill, Macaulay, Buckle and Lecky was zero. (I hope it is unnecessary to say that I am not suggesting that these beacons of Enlightenment were themselves egalitarians, even in theory.)

Francis Galton, in *Hereditary Genius* (1869), did valuable service against the ridiculous axiom of equality, and the absurd theorems derived from it. He pointed out, for example, the great differences in ability which exist even among tiny groups of exceptionally able people—for example, in the mathematical ability of the best Cambridge mathematics graduates in any given year—and which exist, *a fortiori*, everywhere else. And he showed, with irresistible biographical detail, how strong the tendency is for exceptional ability to be hereditary. His most memorable examples were drawn from mathematics and music: the Bach family being the most striking case of hereditary genius in music, the Bernoulli family in mathematics.

Of course, long before Galton, countless people of common sense had noticed that musical and mathematical ability are strongly hereditary. Yet that hero of the Enlightenment, Tom Paine, ridiculed the idea of an hereditary legislator, by saying that such a thing was "as absurd as an hereditary mathematician".[15] Nor was this an individual aberration: it accurately expressed the boundless folly and ignorance of the Enlightened in general.

If belief in equality, or externalism, or educationism, was ridiculous before Francis Galton, it was even more so after him. What word is there, then, to describe those beliefs after Mendel, de Vries, and William Bateson? Yet again: how is one to describe those beliefs *now*, when human genetics has existed for nearly 100 years? Ridiculous is clearly far too weak. "Insane" is nearer the mark, although it is obviously not literally right.

In 1914 William Bateson gave the Presidential address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, then meeting in Australia. His subject was heredity, and the resolution of the old "Nature *versus* Nurture" dispute about human beings. He recapitulated the arguments which had always, even before the discovery of genes, compelled biologists to take the "Nature" side of that dispute. But now, he said, that "long-standing controversy . . . is drawing to an end".[16] Thanks originally to Mendel, the actual mechanism of all inheritance is now known, a certain amount of knowledge of human genetics already exists, and this amount is certain to increase rapidly and greatly. This new knowledge, Bateson believed, must infallibly dispel the last vestige of belief in the Enlightenment delusion of equality, and in the various theorems derived from it.

SO IT SHOULD HAVE. But nothing of the kind has happened: in fact, quite the reverse. Equality, externalism, and educationism are the basis, now even more than ever, of all government policy in the free countries (as they have been all along, and avowedly, in the Communist ones). In the most important of our educational institutions, the Faculties of Arts, these old delusions have even assumed new forms of unprecedented absurdity and virulence. For there the Feminists and the Marxists, heirs of the Enlightenment all, hold undisputed sway. There they unite to teach countless intelligent but ignorant young people that not only ordinary differences in ability among humans, but even differences of sex, of age, of health, are all (as they like to say) "socially constituted": nay, that death itself is only a capitalist/patriarchal "formation". (Belief in future immortality had been a commonplace among the Enlightened in the 18th century: Malthus noticed it in Godwin, and remarked that immortality would not exactly lighten the pressure of population.[17])

What *is* one to call such beliefs? It is hard to find the right word: perhaps "cognophobe" would be best—derived from the useful recent neologism "cognophobia", which signifies an incurable hatred of scientific knowledge. At any rate, the late discredited Russian biologist Trofim Lysenko, who merely believed that citrus trees and wheat can be educated by changing their external circumstances, now appears by comparison with our governments and our educators a very paragon of rationality.

Still, it is doubtful whether this farce can be protracted much longer. For we now have not only extensive knowledge of human genetics, but a considerable and frightening capacity to "engineer" genetic change. We also have a planet which, by the universal and heartfelt testimony of its human inhabitants, is (to say the least) populous enough already, although raging ethnic conflicts are doing their bit to reduce it. For these reasons it is probable that contraception will soon be, for the first time, acknowledged everywhere as a part of Enlightenment; and that the marriage between contraception and eugenics, which took place early in our century but suffered a setback around 1940, will soon be resumed, this time with massive finality.

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[15] Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (ed. Watts, 1946), p. 49.

[16] William Bateson, *Report of the Eighty-Fourth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (1915), p. 36.

[17] See ch. XII of Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population.*

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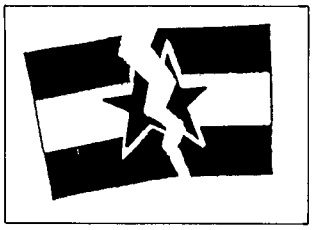
Christopher Cviić

Calm Look at a Troubled Land

The Nations of Yugoslavia



WHATEVER HAPPENED to Yugoslavia? Only a decade ago, at the time of President Tito's death in May 1980, it was a stable country, playing on the world stage an influential role quite out of proportion either to its size or to its economic and military power. Even beyond the Communist world, Yugoslavia's distinctive system of workers' self-management—evolved since Tito's break with Stalin in 1948—had become a source of inspiration for those who sought a "third way" between Soviet-style state socialism and free-market Western capitalism.

Now the Yugoslav federation is beset by grave economic problems (hyper-inflation, a large hard-currency debt, high unemployment), and facing mounting social unrest—perhaps revolution—while the noisy internal conflicts and bitter strife among its disparate nations cause concern to its neighbours as well as further afield. For many outsiders, Yugoslavia seems to be well on the road to disintegration. As for the Yugoslavs, their mood is best summed up in a joke which went the rounds at the end of last year: "If only we'd knuckled under to Stalin, we'd be free today. . . ."

Yet there is a logic behind the turmoil. The country follows its own complex political priorities, rather than the rational economic agenda set for it by well-meaning outsiders. And almost invariably these can be traced back to the multi-ethnic state in which "the national factor" plays such a crucial role.

All aspects of life are seen through the prism of "national" calculations. Of course, living standards, jobs, pensions, health, education matter as much to Yugoslavia's multi-national citizens as they do to nationally homogeneous Poland and Hungary. But in Yugoslavia everybody is a member of a community within the state—the ethnic nation in which personal identity is anchored, and to which the first loyalty is owed.

Questions of national identity are politically hyper-sensitive, for the process of national differentiation is still far from over. Tito's era saw the birth of two "new" nations. The Bosnian Moslems, descendants of former Catholics and members of the heretical Bogomil sect, who had embraced Islam during the period of Ottoman rule (1463-1878), were recognised as a separate nation in the 1960s. And in 1967, establishment of the Macedonian nation was completed. But there are those who challenge the legitimacy of this process, and deny the ethnic authenticity of the Bosnian Moslems and the Macedonians, decrying them as "manufactured nations". The separate nationhood of the Montenegrins, formally reaffirmed by Titoist Yugoslavia, is also vigorously contested.

This continuing and politically destabilising national volatility can be illustrated most vividly. In the latest (1981) census, some 1.2 million people (out of a total population of 22.4 million) "renounced" their ethnic grouping or nationhood, and declared themselves to be "Yugoslavs"—prompted by a variety of reasons, including intermarriage and political opportunism in strongly "Yugoslav" institutions like the Army and the Diplomatic Service. Hence passionate discussions about, for example, which language is to dominate in federal institutions.

AT TIMES of acute external danger—during the period from the break with the Soviet Union in 1948 right up to Stalin's death in 1953, for instance, and again when Soviet troops invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968—the broader Yugoslav framework loomed larger than the narrower "national" one. But such temporary exceptions simply confirm the rule that in Yugoslavia it is nation, rather than class or race, that represents the most significant political division.

In contrast to the centralising royal régime that had ruled the country from 1918-1941, the Yugoslav Communists accepted the need for a federation to accommodate the country's complex ethnic make-up. The post-1945 federal system, made up of six republics (Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia) and two autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina, which

CHRISTOPHER CVIIĆ, a Croat from Yugoslavia, where he attended school and university, came to Britain in 1954 to work for the BBC. He took a further degree at the London School of Economics, and carried out post-graduate research in Yugoslav history at St Antony's College, Oxford. Since 1969 he has been with "The Economist", specialising in Eastern Europe and travelling regularly to Yugoslavia. He also edits "The World Today", the monthly journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

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formed part of Serbia), was matched by the formation of separate Communist Party organisations: each of the republics and provinces had its own Central or Provincial Committee.

Of course, under Tito, real power was wielded by the Politburo in Belgrade, but these separate Party organisations had significant political importance. Like the country's federal system, they represented an acknowledgement of the national aspirations of those peoples of Yugoslavia (notably the Croats, the Macedonians, the Bosnian Moslems, and the Albanians) who had looked upon the pre-War, strongly centralist, Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia as a threat to their identity and their national interests.

As Yugoslavia began to decentralise during the 1950s, Party leaders in the republics and autonomous provinces began to find it politically advantageous to speak up for "their" region, usually over such questions as allocation of investment capital from Belgrade's central funds. However, the Communist fiction of "the primacy of class interest" was maintained. Those who showed "nationalist tendencies"—i.e. threatened to escape from the local Party leaders' control into the non-Communist intelligentsia—were kept under careful review. Each local leadership was expected to "sweep its own doorstep first", so Serbs fought Serbian nationalists, Croats fought Croats, and so on. If a local leadership seemed to be falling into the trap of "opportunism", going too far in espousing local interests in order to boost their popularity, Tito stepped in. . . .

When the Yugoslav Communist Party became fully "federalised" in the 1970s, the last decade of Tito's life, his unquestioned authority and charisma ensured a relatively smooth functioning of the system. (After all, the senior Party leaders owed their positions to him.) His death was therefore deeply unsettling for the whole hierarchy, despite the elaborate system of rules which he bequeathed to them. These included regular rotation of offices and rigorous observance of "the nationality key", to prevent any one nation from falling under the domination of another—in effect, to forestall any return to the pre-1941 situation when the Serbs, Yugoslavia's largest nation, had exercised hegemonial power over non-Serbs. Many regional frustrations accumulated over the years, but for a long time none of Tito's successors dared (or felt strong enough) to challenge his rules, especially in respect to the inviolability of federalism.

All this changed in 1986, with the appointment of Slobodan Milošević, a little known Party *apparatchik*, as boss of the Serbian Communist Party. Milošević boldly swept aside Tito's rule tying each leadership to its particular territory. He began to speak for all of Yugoslavia's 8.1 million Serbs—not just for those in Serbia and its autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, but also in other republics. By articulating his fellow-Serbs' frustrations, Milošević has reaped huge political advantages, though at considerable cost to the stability of the federal system and of Yugoslavia as a whole. He was, however, merely the catalyst for a change that was already getting under way, since each national group had for some time been reassessing the whole concept of Yugoslavia and its own position within the federation.

The Serbs

THE MAIN frustration for the Serbs was Tito's federalism, especially as it developed in the latter period of his rule, reaching its final form in the 1974 Constitution. Their case was most clearly formulated in the memorandum drafted for the Serbian Academy of Sciences, which was leaked to the press in September 1986. Originally prepared as a contribution to the public debate about reform of the Yugoslav political and economic system in the post-Tito era, this remarkably outspoken document formulated the Serbs' main objections to today's Yugoslavia. Three complaints were emphasised:

(1) The allegedly discriminatory policy towards Serbia in the economic field throughout the post-1945 period—reflecting that old anti-Serbian bias of the pre-1941 Communist Party of Yugoslavia and of the Communist International (Comintern) in Moscow.

(2) The partition of Serbia, under the leadership of Tito (a Croat) and Edvard Kardelj, his second-in-command (a Slovene), into three parts: Serbia proper, and its autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina which, bypassing Serbia, were allowed direct participation in decision-making at federal level.

(3) The allegedly anti-Serbian policy pursued in Kosovo by local Albanian "separatists" and "irredentists", with support from other Yugoslav republics, resulting in a steady exodus of Serbs from this centre of Serbia's medieval state.

The authors of the draft memorandum called for reversal of what they described as the "Strong Yugoslavia, Weak Serbia" policy, and in particular for abolition of the 1974 Constitution under which Kosovo and Vojvodina had been permitted to evolve into *de facto* republics. In non-Serb areas of Yugoslavia the memorandum met with hostile criticism, partly because of its *dirigiste* economic assumptions, but above all because it was seen as yet another manifestation of "Great Serbian hegemonism". Among the Serbs, however, there was widespread acceptance of the document's main

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thesis—that under the "anti-Serb" Tito-Kardelj coalition, which had been in charge of Yugoslavia since 1945, the Serbs had had a raw deal. There was no question of any Serbian rejection of Yugoslavia as an entity. What the memorandum condemned was a Yugoslavia which was seen as harmful to Serbian interests, denying the traditional *Staatsvolk* their predominant position.

Publication of the draft memorandum coincided with the appearance of numerous articles and books (they have since become a torrent), unfavourably contrasting Tito's Yugoslavia with the pre-1941 Royalist régime with its Serbian dynasty, its special position for the Serbian Orthodox Church, Serbian dominance in the Army, the Police, the Gendarmerie, the senior ranks of the Civil Service, and diplomacy; and with Kosovo re-Serbianised by ex-soldiers and other settlers.

Not surprisingly, the Serbs have in recent years made a point of once again celebrating in a solemn fashion the anniversary of the founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—the first, royalist, Yugoslavia. Equally predictably, Yugoslavia's non-Serbs have studiously ignored the anniversary, or have used it to emphasise that between 1918 and 1941 Yugoslavia's citizens had lived under a galling Serbian hegemony.

The Slovenes

THESE CALCULATIONS of national interest look very different to the Slovenes. Back in 1918, in the wake of the Habsburg Empire's break-up, they had felt threatened by pan-German and Italian imperialism. They were eager to become part of the new kingdom, which they saw as a powerful shield against the enemy to the west and the north. Later, World War II brought the Slovenes the prospect of annihilation: their nation was targeted by Hitler for extinction. After 1945, therefore, rejoining Yugoslavia—albeit a Communist Yugoslavia—seemed only natural.

But after four-and-a-half decades of life in the new Yugoslavia, the Slovenes see an altered situation. The old danger of non-Slav imperialists gobbling them up has disappeared, and Slovenia has excellent relations with Austria and Italy, its two peaceful and highly prosperous neighbours. Since 1978 it has been participating, together with Croatia, in the work of an informal, low-profile organisation (called Alpen-Adria in German, Alpe-Jadran in Croat and Slovene), whose purpose is cooperation in the fields of culture, energy, environment, sport, transport, etc. There are other members as well: the two western regions of Hungary; five Austrian *Länder*; four northern regions of Italy; and, in West Germany, Bavaria. Through this interaction, and in other ways, the Slovenes have discovered how much they still have in common with these former regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

By the same token, their new westward orientation emphasises the Slovenes' growing distance from Yugoslavia's eastern regions, which seem to bring only problems—trouble in Kosovo; resistance to economic reforms; and, most important, the threat of a new centralist régime that would curtail, or even end, Slovenia's present autonomy. Not surprisingly, the Slovenes are restless—rather like tenants in a large apartment-house who feel that the rent is too high and that they do not care for most of their neighbours.

They want out. On 27 September last year, Slovenia's Parliament in Ljubljana adopted a series of amendments to their republic's Constitution, including the right to secede from Yugoslavia.

The Croats

THE FEELING that life in the apartment-house is becoming rather unpleasant is shared by the Croats, Yugoslavia's second largest nation. For them, too, Yugoslavia had represented in earlier years a shield against Italian aspirations. (The Croatian Adriatic coast was promised to Italy under the 1915 Treaty of London, as an inducement to join World War I on the Entente side.) Post-1918 Yugoslavia was a shattering disappointment, for they lost the autonomy they had enjoyed as one of the "historic" nations of the Habsburg Empire under the *Nagodba* (Compromise) signed with the Hungarians in 1868, a year after the *Ausgleich* between the Austrian and Hungarian halves of the monarchy.

The Slovenes were tucked away in Yugoslavia's Alpine north-west and further protected by their linguistic separateness, but the Croats felt extremely vulnerable to "denationalisation" by the Serbs, who were closer to them both geographically and linguistically.

In August 1939 most Croats had welcomed Prince Paul's agreement to limited autonomy for Croatia. It would, they thought, be the first step towards a federal reorganisation Yugoslavia. But federation was bitterly opposed by the Serbian political parties. So when Germany and Italy (assisted by Bulgaria and Hungary) attacked and dismembered Yugoslavia in April 1941, most Croats (like the majority of Yugoslavia's other non-Serbs) were far from sorry to say goodbye to a state they had never felt to be their own. (The Serbs, in contrast, experienced Yugoslavia's collapse as a traumatic event, and even produced a Serbian variant of the "stab-in-the-back" theory, blaming the 1941 military defeat not on the invaders' overwhelming strength and the poor organisation and leadership of the—largely Serb-officered—Royal Army, but on the "treachery" of the Croats and other non-Serbs.)

Any joy the Croats may have felt at the demise of Yugoslavia was soon dispelled when Croatia, stripped of most of its Adriatic coast, was divided into two Occupation Zones (one German, one Italian) and placed under the notorious Ante Pavelić whose régime organised a systematic extermination of Croatia's Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, and any Croats who happened to disagree with him. Of the many thousands of Croatian Serbs who fled into the forests to save their lives, some joined the royalist Četniks, but the bulk ended up in the ranks of Tito's partisans. That 1941-45 period left a bitter legacy of Serb mistrust towards the Croats. It is still alive today.

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The post-1945 territorial settlement returned to Croatia the territories annexed by Mussolini in 1941, and also those (including Istria) which had been taken by Italy after 1918. But the Croats continued to feel ill at ease; they felt themselves to be "a nation on probation". Even the most innocuous manifestations of national feeling were branded as "nationalist extremism" by the Communist authorities.

This was the fate that befell the 1967 "Language Declaration", signed on behalf of 19 Croatian cultural institutions by 140 prominent scholars, writers, and other intellectuals. More than half of them were Communist Party members; they included Miroslav Krleža—Croatia's greatest living writer, a member of the Croatian Central Committee, and a personal friend of Tito. The Declaration demanded Constitutional recognition and full equality for four languages—Croatian, Macedonian, Serbian, and Slovene—in which all federal laws and other federal Acts were to be published (there were then only three dominant languages: Macedonian, Serbo-Croat, and Slovene). It called for the use of standard Croatian in the schools and throughout the mass media of the Croatian republic, instead of Serbo-Croatian, which was rejected by many Croats as "a political language". The Declaration caused public uproar, and several of its signatories were expelled from the Party.

Worse was to come in 1971-72, with Tito's crushing of "the Croatian Spring". A large-scale purge, with many arrests, produced effects not unlike those in Czechoslovakia after the 1968 suppression of "the Prague Spring". Tito's purges of "liberals" and "technocrats" in Slovenia and Serbia in 1972 were less harsh than in Croatia, but all caused the loss of many able, modern-minded leaders.

MOST CROATS now have little time for Yugoslavia, but until relatively recently there has been little talk of secession. This at least partly reflects a realisation of the difficulties involved in any cutting of the umbilical cord. The greatest of these is the presence of Croatia's large Serbian minority (11.6% of its total population are Serbs, but they have a disproportionate representation in the Party and the Police). In Slovenia, in 1987, 82% of all Communist Party members were Slovenes, 6.5% Serbs, and 5% Croats. In Croatia, however, 19.4% of all Party members were Serbs, while only 59.6% were Croats; and it must be assumed that a large proportion of the 17.9% who declared themselves to be "Yugoslavs" were in fact Serbs. The Serbs of Croatia, who include a large number of old Partisans and retired Police and Army officers, have on many occasions in the past demonstrated their opposition to any greater degree of independence for Croatia that would, willy-nilly, separate them from the rest of Yugoslavia's Serbs.

[1] With the Bulgarians, this non-recognition arises from territorial grievances. Greece, on the other hand, believes that the present-day Macedonians are ethnically a totally different people from the ancient civilisation ruled by Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great. They object to the "hijacking" of a glorious name, and hence will not even recognise the academic qualifications of Greek students who take degrees at Macedonia's universities.

The Bosnians

THE "NATIONAL" PROBLEM, however, is no longer mainly a Croat-Serb affair. Under Tito's federal system, the country's other nations—the Moslems of Bosnia and Hercegovina, the Macedonians, and the Montenegrins, as well as the two biggest national minorities, the Albanians of Kosovo and the Hungarians of Vojvodina—have all been upgraded politically. They all matter now.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia would not please the two million or so Bosnian Moslems, for it would revive their old nightmare: the dreaded prospect of the division of their republic, which has a particularly complex national structure. According to the 1981 census, Moslems make up 39.5% of its population; the Serbs run them close with 32%; and then come the Croats with 18.4%. Federation or confederation, Yugoslavia is a preferred solution for the Moslems.

But if division were to become reality, the Bosnian Moslems would probably throw their weight behind the idea of a link-up with Croatia and Slovenia. There are two main reasons for this: good memories of the period between 1878-1918 when Bosnia (together with Croatia and Slovenia) formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; and a deep mistrust of the Serbs. The Bosnian republic has decided to become a member of the Alpen-Adria group.

The Macedonians

UNDER THE Tito régime, Macedonia attained the status of a federal republic, with full support for development of its national institutions and language, and for its own autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church (in the teeth of bitter opposition from the Serbian Orthodox Church, which since then has successfully managed to block recognition by other Orthodox Churches).

Abroad, the Yugoslav government has promoted recognition of the Macedonian nation, and has regularly engaged in disputes with Greece and Bulgaria over their refusal to extend recognition.[1] All this has been, from the Macedonian point of view, a great improvement over the pre-1941 period, when Macedonia was simply a part of southern Serbia, and exposed to a policy of systematic Serbianisation. Not surprisingly, the Macedonians welcomed the break-up of royalist Yugoslavia in 1941, but the Bulgarians who then annexed their land proved a disappointment, while Tito's régime offered them full Macedonian nationhood.

But Macedonia is now in a parlous state economically, chiefly as a result of the mistaken investment policy pursued when a large injection of capital followed the 1963 Skopje earthquake. Even worse is its political predicament. Macedonia shares with Serbia a sense of danger from the Albanians, who make up well over a quarter of Macedonia's total population, and in its western part, which borders on Albania proper, are in a majority.

The possibility of an Albanian federal unit within Yugoslavia frightens the Macedonians: they suspect that it would include not only the Serbian province of Kosovo, but also Albanian-inhabited western Macedonia, right up to Skopje.

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They, too, are alarmed by the recent revival of Serbian nationalism that could, once again, seek to reconquer "southern Serbia"—i.e. Macedonia. So they feel beleaguered from both sides.

The Montenegrins

THE SETTING-UP of a separate federal republic of Montenegro in 1945 represented a victory for the Montenegrin *zelenaši* (the Greens), who take the view that, for all their close connections with the Serbs—they are, historically, considered to be a tribe of the Serbian nation—the Montenegrins are a totally separate people. However, union with Serbia is advocated by the *bjelaši* (the Whites), and it was they who prevailed in 1918 when, against strong opposition from their exiled King Nikola, Montenegro joined Yugoslavia. (The names derive from the coloured ballot-slips used in the referendum. A white slip indicated a vote for union with Yugoslavia, a green slip a vote for independence.)

Since a political coup in January last year, Montenegro is once again under the *bjelaši*, with a leadership close to Slobodan Milošević, who describes Montenegro and Serbia as "Two eyes in one head". The *zelenaši* have fallen back to defensive positions, but have not yet been completely routed. Recently, Montenegro decided to follow Bosnia's example and join the Alpen-Adria group.

The Hungarians

THE BULK OF Yugoslavia's Hungarians live in Serbia's autonomous province of Vojvodina, and account for 18.9% of its total population (54.4% of whom are Serbs). Under the Yugoslav federal system, they have enjoyed a wide degree of cultural autonomy, as well as representation within Vojvodina's power structure commensurate with their numbers.

In comparison with the maltreated Hungarians of Romania and Czechoslovakia, those in Yugoslavia have on the whole done well. However, the rise of Serbian nationalism since the mid-1980s disturbs the Vojvodina Hungarians, and could stimulate a desire to leave the Yugoslav federation and join neighbouring Hungary.

The Albanians

THE WORST-TREATED national group in pre-1941 Yugoslavia was the ethnic Albanians. In the 1930s they even faced the possibility of mass expulsion to Turkey and Albania, although this danger was averted due to lack of funds with which to compensate these countries for the influx. The Albanians welcomed the defeat and collapse of royalist Yugoslavia in 1941, when the Italians—the Occupying Power in that area—incorporated the largely Albanian-inhabited Kosovo and western Macedonia into a "Greater Albania" under their protectorate, providing food and arms as well as a measure of local autonomy.

Not surprisingly, therefore, few Albanians joined Tito's guerrilla struggle, still less than that of the Serbian Četniks led by Colonel Mihailović. The later stages of the War, however, raised the local level of support for the Partisans, with the prospect that Kosovo and other areas inhabited by Albanians might be incorporated into Albania proper, under the Yugoslav-supported Communist leadership of Enver Hoxha. When, at the end of the War, Kosovo was in fact returned to Yugoslavia, together with western Macedonia, there was a strong Albanian armed resistance, which continued for several years.

For two decades, Kosovo remained under a special police régime. But at least Tito's central government in Belgrade was sufficiently sensitive politically not to allow the return of the Serbian colonists who had settled in Kosovo in the 1920s and '30s, and had been chased away under the Italian Occupation.

As part of Yugoslavia's liberalisation after the fall in 1966 of Aleksandar Ranković, the powerful Secret Police chief and Party cadre Secretary who was himself a Serb by nationality, Kosovo received increased aid and autonomy. Eventually, under the 1974 Constitution, it was granted the status of an autonomous province with direct participation in the federal organs, including the (collective) federal presidency and the Party presidium. In the spring of 1981, however, after Tito's death, large-scale demonstrations erupted in Kosovo, demanding formal upgrading of the province to the status of a full republic within the Yugoslav federation. The demonstrations were crushed, and severe repression followed, but at least Kosovo retained its autonomy—until March last year. It was then that, as a result of Serbia's victory in the battle over revision of the 1974 Constitution, the Serbian government regained control of Kosovo's courts, police, and territorial defence.

Under the newly amended Constitution, adopted in March 1989, it is not necessary to consult Kosovo about further changes which affect its status. One of the new amendments states that these can be introduced only by the Serbian Assembly—where Kosovo is represented but has no power of veto.

Kosovo's Albanians continue to resist. A general strike in the province in February 1989 was followed by a hunger strike by Albanian miners. When the Constitutional changes were actually adopted, first by a Kosovo Assembly ringed by Army tanks on 23 March, and then on 28 March by Serbia's own Assembly, province-wide unrest lasted six days and resulted in 24 deaths. The wholesale repression which followed—including the arrest of the former Party leader of the province, Azem Vllasi, together with a group of prominent Albanians, and the internment without trial in Serbia proper of nearly 200 others—provoked international reaction. The European Parliament passed a resolution condemning the events, and dispatched a fact-finding mission. Critical resolutions were passed by the US Congress. But repression has continued, and so has Albanian unrest. Despite Serbia's parlous financial condition, plans to settle

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more than 100,000 Serbian colonists in Kosovo are said to be well advanced.

But in Serbia the gung-ho Slobodan Milošević's policy remains popular, for many Serbs instinctively see the Albanians as a modern version of their former Turkish oppressors. It was in Kosovo on 28 June 1389 that the Serbian Army, led by Prince Lazar, had been defeated by the Turks—a débâcle that ushered in a humilating five centuries of life under Turkish rule. Recovery of Kosovo was the constant hope and aim during those long years. By 1912, however, when Kosovo was at long last regained, the bulk of the Serbs had left, while the number of local Albanians had increased.

Principally because of a high birth rate, the Albanians now comprise about 90% of Kosovo's population, whereas the Serbs' share has dropped during the past ten years to below 10%. Steady Serbian emigration from the province has also been a factor. The Serbs blame this on local Albanian "terror", while the Albanians point out that they pay large sums of money (often in hard currency earned by Albanian *Gastarbeiter* in the West) for Serbian farms and houses; and that, in any case, the Serbs merely wish to build a better life for themselves. Kosovo is the poorest region of Yugoslavia.

The Communist Party

MILOŠEVIĆ HAS USED the Kosovo issue to build a new and aggressive type of populist movement. Throughout the summer of 1988 his followers staged a series of huge rallies throughout Serbia. Then, in October, they held one in Novi Sad—the capital of Vojvodina province, whose leaders had been resisting Milošević's bid for its reabsorption into the Serbian republic. A new, pro-Milošević leadership was installed in Vojvodina.

A similar attempt to bring a pro-Milošević group to power in Montenegro failed, but the second attempt, in January last year, met with success. The final Constitutional victory over Kosovo in March saw Milošević's popularity rising to unprecedented heights among the Serbs—not simply those in Serbia proper, but throughout the entire federation. But his attempts to use the Serbs of Bosnia and Hercegovina (32% of the population) and in Croatia (11.6%) to destabilise the local Party leaders of those republics met with failure. By November, the Slovene authorities had banned the rally which his supporters wanted to hold in Ljubljana, the capital, on 1 December—anniversary of the founding of the first, royalist, Yugoslavia in 1918. Serbia retaliated by proclaiming a boycott of Slovene goods, and broke off all cultural relations with Slovenia.

By now, of course, Milošević's bully-boy tactics had thoroughly frightened not only the Croatian and Slovene leaderships, but also that of Bosnia and Hercegovina, and even of Macedonia. His bid to push the Yugoslav Communist Party towards recentralisation at its Extraordinary Congress held in January this year was seen by many non-Serbs as part of a bid for total power—throughout the whole of Yugoslavia. After acrimonious debates, the Slovene delegation walked out. Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia "suspended" their participation when Milošević insisted that nevertheless the Congress should continue its work.

This episode marks the *de facto* demise of the Yugoslav Communist Party—the force which Tito saw as the glue that would hold Yugoslavia together after his death. Now that the Party organisations in Croatia and Slovenia have opted for a multi-party system, any attempt to put the Yugoslav Party together again would be quite unrealistic. The Slovene or Croat Communists' chances of survival in competition with other political parties would be ruined by concessions to Milošević-style Party recentralisation.

The Army

CAN ANYTHING hold the country together? The Army, perhaps? Yugoslavia's officer corps is "unitarist". It does not want the federation to disintegrate, not least because that would mean the end of the Yugoslav Army and of their professional careers. Some 70% of all officers and non-commissioned officers are Serbs, and presumably there are Milošević-sympathisers among them. But this does not automatically imply support for "Great Serbian" chauvinism among the Army as a whole, and in fact it has been reluctant to become involved. Imagine the difficulties it might encounter if it became embroiled in some sort of coup in support of a recentralised Yugoslavia, when (according to reports) about 30% of all Army recruits are Albanians. . . . It is hard to visualise these Albanians and the other non-Serbs obeying orders to shoot their fellow-nationals.

But the Army might yet find itself involved—perhaps in the suppression of an incipient social revolution if the present lurch towards economic catastrophe is not halted in time by Ante Marković, Yugoslavia's able (and reformist) federal Prime Minister. There is a danger, too, that a full-scale civil war could flare up in Kosovo, especially if the Milošević régime carries out its plan to settle Serbian colonists there, with the aid of substantial housing and other subsidies. The Army would then inevitably find itself drawn into the ensuing conflict. Many in Yugoslavia believe that this is precisely what Milošević wants, now that political victory through the Party has eluded him.

Finis Yugoslaviae?

COULD YUGOSLAVIA eventually evolve—as the Croats and the Slovenes seem to want—into a confederation made up of two halves, a latter-day Austria-Hungary? The idea has its attractions, but there are many snags.

It is easy to perceive the advantages that such a "dualist" arrangement would offer Slovenia and Croatia, and perhaps also Bosnia. Economically, they would achieve greater freedom to pursue the introduction of a market economy, and

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could establish closer relations with their neighbours and with other partners in Western Europe and the West as a whole. Politically, they would receive a guarantee of autonomy, with scope to pursue national consensus policies within a pluralistic context.

It is more difficult to see what this dual confederation could offer Serbia and the rest of eastern Yugoslavia. Economically, they are worse off than the western part and at the moment depend on it for subsidies. Politically, a tricky question would arise. Where are the borders to be drawn between Yugoslavia's eastern and western halves?

Given its present political mood, it is certain that large areas of what are today Bosnia and Croatia would be demanded by Serbia. Indeed, Milošević is already being outflanked by ultra-nationalists like Vuk Drašković, a Serbian writer from Bosnia who heads a movement called "Serbian National Renewal". He campaigns for a "Greater Serbia" that would take in not only Macedonia and Montenegro (and, of course, Vojvodina and Kosovo), but also the whole of Bosnia and large parts of Croatia.

Any attempt by Slovenia and Croatia to secede from the Yugoslav federation could precipitate a Serbian coup throughout the whole of Yugoslavia, or at the very least the occupation of what many Serbs would see as "Greater Serbia". This eventuality has parallels with the "amputation" of Yugoslavia with which King Alexander threatened Croatian leaders during the 1920s, when he said they could have independence, but at the price of occupation of any territory settled by Serbs. That could be extremely dangerous: it could lead to civil war. But secession by the western republics—or by Slovenia going it alone—is unlikely for other reasons. International complications, for example; and the difficulty of coordinating such an action between Croatia and Slovenia (soon, with the competition of political parties, to be under new, not necessarily Communist leaders) and of carrying Bosnia with them, as they would have to if the outcome of such a move were to be assured.

It is more likely that the conflict will, for some time at least, continue to be waged within the shell of the present Yugoslav state. A grand *Ausgleich* could come eventually, once all the republics and provinces have legitimate governments with a mandate to negotiate. But there would first have to be a change of régime in Serbia, and restoration of human and political rights in Kosovo. Meanwhile, the danger of a Lebanon-in-Yugoslavia will remain just round the corner, not least because of the country's desperate economic situation.

In previous times, the West would have wanted to support a strong leader—any strong leader—who would be able to "keep the country together", whether or not its inhabitants actually wanted to remain in each other's embrace. Now that Yugoslavia is no longer strategically so important, there is more room for manoeuvre, for holding back, for keeping an open mind about what is going on there. Western policy can afford a more laid-back attitude than it could in the competitive atmosphere of the Cold War, offering such help as is needed and possible, but avoiding giving the impression to the peoples of Yugoslavia that the West needs Yugoslavia more than they themselves do.

There should be no illusion that the solutions will be easy. Yugoslavia greatly resembles the Soviet Union. It is a flawed country built across a great divide of cultures and civilisations. Its own citizens would not choose to reinvent it. One day it will probably dissolve its ties, as Norway and Sweden did in 1905. Meanwhile, what is wanted is not ideal solutions, but sensible damage-limitation.

Night's Song

In land poisoned by too many eyes,
in grass which flattens itself under the wind
pretending obedience beneath
the bent cradle of stars; a pulse,
an animal stillness burrows.

In the furthest corner of the far paddock
that place which is heaven to small things,
something sits up, takes note, takes care.
A water rat? A snake hunting? The air?
Something else is there, listening.

The moving grass is a hand wavering,
hesitant in response. I take it, shake it,
wring out the moisture from its leaves.

The suddenly-infested landscape stops
its secret motors dead.
Each blade of grass and breath of mouse is fixed.
Clouds come closer, elbows on hills,
lured by something willed.

Tony Lintermans

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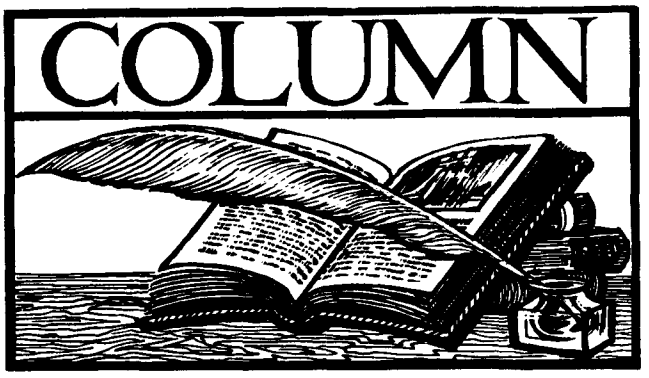

"PUNTS FOR HIRE—NO POLES." That sign appeared on a Cambridge boat-house in the 1940s, and offended some Polish airmen until they realised what it meant: a wartime shortage. Today's equivalent might be "DUTY-FREE WHISKY—NO IRISH" or "COLLECTOR'S OLD PENNY STAMPS FOR SALE—NO BLACKS". But the Race Relations Board would probably get there before the riots began.

I remembered the Cambridge notice when I took a taxi in Berlin a few weeks ago. The driver locked my bag in the boot, explaining "We have to be careful, with all these Poles about". So much, I thought, for the spirit of pan-European *glasnost*: the new "European home" looked like having bolts on every door. Some Berliners, like my cabbie, would certainly welcome them. One of the misgivings about reunification that West Germans are chary of expressing is the fear of being flooded with jobless or work-shy refugees, *Arbeitslos oder Arbeitsscheu*. That, as much as imported inflation, is what worries ordinary people; and, like many such concerns, it tends to be shifted on to foreigners. Hark, hark, the dogs do bark, the strangers are coming to town.

It's especially tough on the Poles, already the targets of so much chauvinist ribaldry in the United States. How many Poles does it take to tell a joke about changing a light bulb? None, because they're sick to death of hearing it already. But, as that last adverb may have reminded you, Poles aren't the only victims: before the Holocaust, there were plenty of jokes against Jews. Look in the thesaurus under "Foreigner" and you'll find a raft of opprobrious nicknames, mostly labelled "(derog)": pommie, limey, rooineck, frog, wog, wop, Nip, dago, gringo, Kraut, whitey, honkie—though my own Roget chastely omits the many dysphemisms for Jew and Black. In at least one case—that of the Bulgars—the name itself has been corrupted into an insult.

"The man you love to hate" was the slogan attached to some screen anti-hero, possibly Erich von Stroheim; and it's quite clear that nations, like people, seem to need someone to dislike. Broadly, the targets fall into three categories: *threats, rivals*, and *underdogs*. The springs of our chauvinism are different in each case.

Threats, obviously enough, arouse fear. Often, it's atavistic. Some claim that the horror the squeamish feel for creepy-crawlies is a throwback to primitive dread of prehistoric monsters, creeping and crawling on a far larger scale. Certainly, the language invoked against those we dislike has historic overtones: we still speak of "vandals", and our parents or grandparents spoke of "Huns". One soporific cliché condemns extreme Conservatives as "somewhat to the Right of Genghiz Khan". Similar early-medieval folk-memories underlie the use of "Tartar" in general. Already a slur in the 16th century, it was being applied to a shrewish woman (as in "She's a regular Tartar") by 1663. And invading hordes continued to haunt more than European imaginations: two hundred years later, Vienna was again under siege by the Turks. This, no doubt, was still in Edward Gibbon's mind a further century onward, when he described with frozen fascination the advance of the Saracens before their defeat in 732 by Charles Martel:

> "A victorious line of march had been prolonged above a thousand miles from the rock of Gibraltar to the banks of the Loire; the repetition of an equal space would have carried the Saracens to the confines of Poland and the Highlands of Scotland; the Rhine is not more impassable than the Nile or Euphrates, and the Arabian fleet might have sailed without a naval combat into the mouth of the Thames. Perhaps the interpretation of the Koran would now be taught in the schools of Oxford, and her pulpits might demonstrate to a circumcised people the sanctity and truth of the revelation of Mohammed.
>
> From such calamities was Christendom delivered by the genius and fortune of one man."

How Gibbon would have felt nowadays, with a mosque in Regent's Park, book-burning in Bradford, a British author in hiding from Moslem death-threats, and a reporter from a British newspaper executed in Iraq, is not hard to imagine. "Are you afraid of religious conflict between Islam and Christianity?" I asked a French professor, long before the most recent crises. "Worse—worse", he gloomily replied.

Fears of a "Crescentade", by analogy with "Crusade", are surely exaggerated; but faced with words and actions they find wild, cruel, and "barbaric" (to quote one British comment on the killing of Farzad Bazoft), Westerners are bound to react with frustrated fury. Can no prosecution be launched against those in Britain who call for the murder of Salman Rushdie? Can no sanctions be imposed against President Saddam Hussein? Words seem the only weapon, as present and former diplomats pour the thin grey buttermilk of reason over hot and righteous indignation, calling for continued contact and stressing the importance of trade. Disgusted by pussyfooting, ashamed of commercial self-interest, and incensed at being so powerless, quite mild-mannered people begin to look back in anger and nostalgia, thinking of Palmerston and gunboat diplomacy and the days when

> *Whatever happens, we have got*
> *The Maxim gun, and they have not.*

Then, with guilty disquiet, they sense in themselves the tainted seeds of racism and fascism, the perennial temptation of "poor whites".

XENOPHOBIA LOOKS healthier when aimed at *rivals*. Often, these are former *threats* who have now ceased to be enemies, as in the case of Germany, Britain, and France. The emotion they arouse may range from amusement to irritation; but it seldom includes real venom. Stereotypes linger: the over-thorough, goose-stepping, not very humor-

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ous German; the insular, stand-offish Briton; the haughty, self-absorbed French. Evidence for these characteristics remains patchy: but any scene or anecdote that seems to confirm them tends to stick in the mind. Charles Darwin noted the tendency in his *Autobiography*:

> "I had, also, during many years, followed a golden rule, namely that whenever a published fact, a new observation or thought came across me, which was opposed to my general results, to make a memorandum of it without fail and at once; for I had found by experience that such facts and thoughts were far more apt to escape from the memory than favourable ones."

A German Chancellor raises juridical issues over frontiers with Poland? Then the Germans must be both pedantic and *revanchiste*. A British Prime Minister questions European monetary union? Then perfidious Albion must be anti-European. A French President tries to promote francophone cooperation? Then France must be intent on cultural hegemony. The newspapers reinforce the hasty conclusions: dense, earnest print in the German heavies, trivial *faits divers* in the British tabloids, concentration on the "hexagon" (France) in the Paris press. Primed with prejudice, travellers notice only what seems to confirm it—a German tourist goggling at savage weapons in the Venice doges' palace, a Briton bound for Spain talking of "going to Europe", French intellectuals on radio or television yet again evaluating Jean-Paul Sartre. We forget the zest of Berlin political cabaret, the scholarly universality of the BBC's World Service, the meticulous foreign reporting in *Le Monde*. And when it comes to Italy, we forget the profundity of Leopardi and remember the *spogliarello* of television's soft-porn shows. Even on the European Community's staff, the old jokes continue. Describe the perfect Eurocrat. Someone with the wit of a German, the linguistic skill of the British, the humility of the French, and the punctuality of the Italians. But there's no harm intended. This is the routine teasing we expect from our families or friends.

Practised on *underdogs*, the ribbing becomes crueller. Every country seems to have its favourite victim—and the victims have sub-victims in their turn. If the British lampoon Ireland, the Irish lampoon Kerry. How many people from Kerry does it take to change a light bulb? Sure and I'll tell you if you show me where it's planted and let me know how much it weighs. Frenchmen make fun of Belgians and their earthy accents: "*C'est grand, Paris, hein?*" they jeered at me when I drove round the Etoile in a car with Belgian plates. French-speaking Belgians, in turn, used to look down on Flemings: "*Passez-moi un évolué!*—put me through to someone educated!" a francophone African was said to have exclaimed in exasperation when answered on the telephone in Flemish. Belgians as a group tend to pick on Luxembourgers: but then so does everyone else. When I lived in the Grand Duchy in the 1950s, British residents used to grumble about the unresponsiveness of local shopkeepers. "Have you got such-and-such?" "*Non.*" "Will you be getting it in?" "*Non.*" "Could I order it?" "*Non.*" "Is there another shop that might have it?" "*Non. Ça n'existe pas au Grand*

THE ENTANGLED WORLD

Herb Deesen

Mankind has accomplished much during its earthly tenure, and refined his life and products extremely well. Yet there's a violent element and brutish tendency within his frame that he's never eradicated. And regrettably nature also has a wild element that surfaces periodically among its beauties and lushness.

In this poetic epic which also encompasses many other topics, the founders of a commune on the California coast hope to avoid these feral instincts, and live with such tolerance, peace and enlightenment, that their commune will serve as a model and cynosure. There's great beauty on their coastal location, sufficient money to meet their needs, but all that is not enough, as the violence surrounding them, the warlike preparations, the crimes, the riots and sensation mongering media all impinge upon the commune's peaceful intentions. There's an accidental death during a riot, the intolerable strain of deciding how to confront violent deeds, and arguments within the commune on ideological issues.

So there are recriminations in the commune, hatreds and animosities, and finally a prodigious storm which damages the coast. All ends with a mudslide, some deaths and an unsightly scar symbolizing the division among the commune members.

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Deesen Books

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Duché." Returning 30 years later to compile a radio programme, I heard exactly the same conversation reported by a recent British arrival, in exactly the same colonialist, what-can-one-do-with-the-natives tone of voice. What we failed to recognise, of course, was that our own attitude had probably provoked the unresponsiveness. No one enjoys being patronised by relatively affluent expatriates.

THE NASTIEST form of chauvinism is in fact a hybrid, blending attitudes towards both *underdogs* and *threats*. Britons caught a glimpse of it during the Falklands War, when Argentine troops, ships, and Exocet missiles were a serious threat to British servicemen, but the antics of the crowds in Buenos Aires seemed to confirm every cliché about Latin excitability. Jumping up and down on one spot may be a normal way of demonstrating in Latin America. In Britain, it looks like an activity for demented clockwork dolls. At the time, it probably helped to make a *threat* look more like an *underdog*, arousing disdain instead of fear or pity.

Something similar, I suspect, may be affecting Western attitudes towards Islam. Watching television coverage of angry crowds in Baghdad, apparently clamouring for blood, few Westerners can have escaped some reflex from the past, perhaps from childhood reading or cinema-going, but also influenced by centuries of history: a vague memory of "mad mullahs", scimitars, and cruelty. At the same time, condescension tinged the picture. Why were so many of the demonstrators wearing identical moustaches? Why were they, too, jumping up and down on the spot? Never mind that a *galabiya* is a wonderfully cool garment in a hot climate: to unsophisticated Western eyes it looks like a long, old-fashioned nightshirt, ridiculous garb for the bedroom, let alone the street. Never mind that the Koran preaches peace and tolerance: these flashing-eyed hotheads, whipped up like a *khamsin* by fanatical fundamentalist leaders, were all that some Westerners needed to help them despise what they also feared.

Not that either emotion need be entirely misplaced. Western values *are* threatened by some Islamic extremists; some forms of extremism *do* deserve to be despised. Multiculturalism, that shibboleth of modern Britain, need not imply cultural relativism, the kind of philosophical Anything-Goes in which no belief or precept is better than another. Multicultural societies in history have tended at length to shake down into eclectic monocultures, borrowing bits from each society to make a messy, organic synthesis, and discarding the offal from both. The trouble is that this takes time. In the present world, we need to make quicker, conscious choices: for tolerance, against dogmatism; for equality between the sexes; for mutual understanding; for rational discussion, not violence; for sceptical open-mindedness; for a sense of proportion and a sense of humour. If some of these offend the fanatics on either side, so be it. Some values *are* better than others, because they make for full and adult human beings; and to this extent a pinch of chauvinism has its uses. Thinkers of the world, unite: you have nothing to lose but your nerve.

But there are signs, regrettably, that far more than a pinch of chauvinism is on the way, and not only in relations between Islam and the West. The opening up of Eastern Europe is also the opening of a Pandora's box. In Romania, in Czechoslovakia, in Yugoslavia, in Poland, and in the Soviet Union old scores and old sores are being revived. Linguistic minorities are reasserting themselves; ethnic identities are being reaffirmed. *Threats*, *rivals*, or *underdogs*? In fact, a blend of all three. To the Soviet Union, the Baltic states are a threat. In Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia there are rivals who might become enemies. In Romania and the Soviet Union there are underdogs. In Poland there are discontented Germans. Hail as you will the rebirth of liberty: the birth of stability looks a long way off.

"Why can't you sit down and discuss your problems like Christian gentlemen?" was the question allegedly put to Arabs and Israelis by some raw young British diplomat. The story's probably apocryphal: but the implied moral is not. No amount of sage advice, from foreign columnists or politicians, is going to make a ha'porth of difference to the way these latent conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe work out. That will depend on the wisdom and skill of the leaders and the patience and well-being of the led. "Well-being" is the key word: if the leaders can deliver that, much pain will be spared.

SO WHAT advice *is* worth offering? Only, I suggest, some basic principles. First, look at history and see where chauvinism—including your own—has led. Or look at Beirut. Secondly, try to determine which category of chauvinism predominates. If only between *rivals*, cool it a little and cheer. If there are *threats*, be very careful, and try to defuse them with federal solutions. If there are *underdogs*, go easy on the ethnic jokes, except as a safety-valve: you may be mocking what you secretly fear.

Politics, it's constantly said, is the art of the possible. It also resembles punting—propelling an awkward craft, from a precarious position, with a single rather blunt instrument which between thrusts has to be used as a rudder. No poles? Well, take a paddle: but beware of losing it up chauvinist creek.

M

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Elizabeth Jennings

My Ships

"When your ships come in"—the words in the nursery sounded
Every tidal pulse, all salty commands I thought of
The shell I picked up one day and put to my ear
And indeed I heard the tide in another key
But not in one less true. The real sea's
Grace-notes were there. I remember
The jetties the little sailing boats were roped to,
The smell of the rock-pools, my legs covered in seaweed,
My eyes searching for prawns. I pulled at limpets
But they resisted as all those ships resisted,
Were anchored somewhere I had not visited yet.
In my mind the blue sea brimmed, I knew the islands,
The cliffs and archipelagoes. Ships sailed by
With sails taut for a moment straining with wind,
Tustling with gales, plucky against the white horses
Which reared and toppled. Some later ships were slowing,
Dawdled under the sun and little breezes,
The yachts slackened their sails, even the steamers
Seemed to drift. Here was a maritime childhood,
A world of minerals, salt pervasive, my ships
Shadows on nursery walls, I watched their prows
As I drifted off to a moonlit, tidal sleep,
Sailed in dreams not deeper than I had imagined
Only more foreign and excitable, only
More mysterious. I think the cargoes were words,
Hoards of adjectives, bales of nouns and sacks
Heavy with verbs. I woke to the shouting birds
Who sang all summer under the nursery window.
All my world was broody with pollen and bird-song,
An inland burgeoning, gooseberries fattening, apples
Swelling and shining, but still the sea sang songs,
Hornpipe and heralding pipes, dog-watch and day-watch,
"When ships come in"—prophetic words in a way
For what else is the roping and nailing of tea-chests of poems?
I know indeed the tug of the poem's tide,
Its being lifted and loosed at last on land
When the crane is drawn away and the sea subsides.
My ship is sailing still but sometimes it stands
On a motionless sea and it is motionless too
As if at anchor. The sailors are sleeping, the storms
Bow and vex and heave in another quarter.
I try to sleep but a dream of sailing breaks through
My drowsiness. I cannot beckon my ships.
Their time is their own and no concern of mine
Or so it seems as I walk again through rock-pools
Savouring salt and iodine and brooding
In a world-wide dream of water.

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Derek Stanford

The Magus Hands in at the Cleaners
The Jacket of a Favourite Ancient Suit

Old Comforter,
old Swaggerer,
companion of my vintage autumn prime—
now Jack Frost's clutched you, clawing at your cuffs;
while, through the leather patches on your arms,
black cold strikes home.
Your armour's wearing thin,
my lovat-green-and-red-check cuirass.

Recall how, of your jauntily faded air,
scholarly Ian Fletcher once declared:
"More like a French colonel of cavalry every day!"
Out of the image I contrived much play;
his soubriquet a cherished boast.

Transfiguration of the quietist
into a *boulevardier militaire*;
frail timid servant of the pen became
sophisticated *beau sabreur*.

This was before the thread began to wear,
the nap to lose its gloss, its velvet sheen—
sad disappearance of sweet self-esteem
which gave the inward man an actor's part
(that secret dandyism of the mind
more potent than narcissus in the glass).

Your lower half—your trews with turn-ups turned;
and bottoms, crotch and knee-caps deftly sewn;
their creases firmly pressed, though paper thin—
forlornly hang upon the door,
awaiting their reunion.
So to the cleaners get you gone
and seek the grace of desperate salvation.

When they have done with you what can be done
(of metamorphoses the final one),
you'll have for respite two remaining seasons:
late blossom-drift of spring, before the heat
of dog-day torches makes you burdensome;
then autumn, with its ornate scroll-work
of ruddy gold and wry descent of leaf.

The decadence of winter-set
you'll not outlast, deciduous ones;
Over's your hour to strut and bask and preen. . . .
Take a low profile now, and praise the sun.

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NOTES & TOPICS

Consuming Passions

On Cars, Codes, & Commercials—By BRIAN MOERAN

Is it just the advent of yet another spring or of my dreaded manopause that makes me see sexual connotations in almost every commodity message around me? A few years ago, I became enthralled by personalised licence-plates used by Californians and, during my walks around Berkeley with Chief (a splendid dawg in whose care I had been temporarily placed), I used to chuckle over the ingenuity of the car owners with seven letters and/or numbers: from *OPNYDER* (Open Wider) to *COIT II* (Coitus) by way of *XX MY 22* (Kiss My *tu-tu*). For all the enjoyment I experienced in puzzling over these and codes like *N TWO O* equals nitrous oxide equals smog, or the disproof of Zeno's paradox in *POS PI*, my dog's erratic perambulations soon obliged me to take note of other aspects of Californian car-lore. My eye initially travelled to the licence-plate surrounds, on which were printed such phrases as *California native*, *Easy does it*, *Smile*, and the ubiquitous *Have a nice day*. These messages were reduplicated in the stickers that decorated many of the local Berkeley automobiles, so that soon it was I who was holding back Chief, rather than vice versa, as I strove to write them all down in a hastily purchased pocket-notebook (since mislaid—alas!—in a hotel room in Leiden).

Life's a beach.
Is it Friday yet?
Why be normal?
I yam what I yam.

I know you know.
Streaking puts colour in your cheeks.
Try it. You'll like it.

Make a friend tonight.
Worth waiting for.
Adventures in miniature.
Go ahead. Make my day.
Oh baby! Just kidding!
Don't take life so seriously. It's only temporary.

Where the hell is LIKELY?

But car-owners were not only preoccupied with what it meant to be "Californian". They had much to say to one another about their cars and the way they drove them:

Back off.
Sundae driver.
Don't laugh. It's paid for.
My lovable wreck.
You're behind me because you're inferior.

My other car is a Porsche.
My other car is a broom.

My other car was totaled.
If you don't like the way I drive, stay off the sidewalk.
I brake for the hell of it.

I brake for unicorns.
I brake for amazons.
I break for coffee.

I brake for old graveyards.
Hit me. I need the money.
Driven by an old bastard.
This car brakes for horses.

My other car was a Stagecoach.

I don't give a damn what your other car is.
This is my other car.

In spite of the aggro expressed in such stickers, drivers clearly supported the fact that Berkeley had been declared a "nuclear free zone" (*Nuclear? No gracias*; *Split wood not atoms*; *You can't hug your kid with nuclear arms*), and were generally against aggression (*El Salvador is Spanish for Vietnam*) and in favour of peace (*Stop the arms race. Not the human race*; *Shoot pool not people*; *Peace is disarming*). This general disapproval of the military aspect of industrial capitalism (*Stop corporate war*) was voiced more positively in comments on environmental issues (*Only one earth*; *Solar energy*; *Live simply that others may simply live*; *Consume less . . . Recycle the rest*), which were themselves related to health (*Healthcare is a right not a privilege*; *Paralysis doesn't have to be a life sentence*; and *Support your local midwife*).

In almost all cases, humour was allowed to enter this sticky discourse. *Nobody for President* and *Great leaders are*

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rare—so I'm following myself, claimed one disenchanted member of the American electorate. *US out of North America*, demanded an anti-imperialist. *Support the right to arm bears*, suggested a frustrated environmentalist. Other stickers ordered us to *Promote wildlife—throw a party*, *Save a whale—harpoon a fat chick*, and *Save the Chocolate Mousse*. Such humour turned blacker with *Cancer cures smoking* and *California's got AIDS and Colorado's got Texans, but California had first choice*. Occasionally, however, I was greeted with a few words of folk wisdom: *Minds are like parachutes; they only function when open*, and *The next time you're feeling perfect, try walking on water*. As the faithful put it, *Expect a miracle!*

A LARGE NUMBER of drivers did in fact put their trust in heavenly beings. *God is alive. I talked to him today*, one pious sticker assured all those on the road (and sidewalks). Another slightly tongue-in-cheek message went: *God said it! I believe it! That settles it!* A black revivalist had *Jesus—the rock that makes me roll*, while another sticker claimed that *When Satan rocks your boat, Jesus is your best anchor*. There was the occasional note of terseness, however, as in *Dammit is not God's last name*, and *God loves you and I'm trying. Honk if you love Jesus* indeed!

Stickers were also concerned with human "relationships"—whether new (*A man of quality is not threatened by a women seeking equality*) or more traditional (*Dave and Elva. United as one*)—and with the frequent tangible result of such relationships (*Avenge yourself—live long enough to be a problem to your kids*). It was hardly surprising to discover, therefore, that special bumper stickers permit drivers on the freeways of California to "Tail Date" other drivers whose looks they like. For a $30 fee, drivers can register their profiles on a Los Angeles based computer and, when they see someone sporting a similar club sticker (a black and white fuchsia, for example), arrange for the dating intermediary to get in touch with him or her. For an extra charge, apparently, flowers, balloons or candy will accompany their profile, and the tail-dating services even offer helpful opening lines (such as "I really like the way you change lanes"!) for the initial telephone conversation between the bumper–sticker dating couple. From glance to romance, *Happiness is being single*.

AND IT IS WITH relations between men and women that this four-wheel discourse is mostly concerned, whether in California or London, where my notebook found further activity upon my sad but inevitable separation from Chief. Sometimes stickers speak on behalf of the cars they adorn and thereby imbue them with human qualities: *Do not touch. I'm not that sort of car*, or *Not too close, I hardly know you*. Such qualities can be male—as in *This car is stubborn, pig-headed and lazy—just like a man*, and *Cars are like men. They promise lots but don't perform*—or female: *This car's a virgin. It won't go all the way*, and *This car is female. Pretty to look at but unreliable and hard to move*.

For the most part, however, it is clearly the drivers themselves speaking through their bumper, or window, stickers. *Never underestimate the power of a woman*; *The best man for a job—is a woman*; and *Women make great leaders. You're following one* are self-congratulatory. Others are more concerned with the opposite sex: *So many men . . . so little time*, which is counterbalanced by *Men have only two faults—everything they say and everything they do* and *Women like the simpler things in life—like men*. The latter are equally forthright: *The road to hell is paved with women drivers* claims one sticker, while another professes: *I love hot women and cold beer*. Just how manly such drivers are is hard to judge, since I have come across such messages as: *The driver of this vehicle has nuts, bolts and screws*, on the one hand, and *Driver impotent. The best women have tried and failed*, on the other.

But whatever the overt object of each sticker—car or driver, female or male—its underlying theme is mostly connected with sex (or with other bodily functions, such as *Save gas. Fart in a jar*). Often the word itself is mentioned:

> *Sex appeal. Please give generously.*
> *Sex instructor. 1st lesson free.*
> *Remember when the air was clean and sex was dirty.*
> *I'm ready for sex of one kind. And half a dozen of another.*

Sometimes, however, "sex" is substituted by a euphemistic "it":

> *Just do it.*
> *See. I told you it would ruin your eyesight.*
> *Honk if you had it last night.*
> *Try it in a Toyota.*
> *Do it in a Corvette . . . if you can.*

"IT" IN FACT turns out to have a number of variations that even the authors of the *Karma Sutra* clearly failed to envisage. According to the claims made by bumper stickers in both England and California, glider pilots do it quietly, chiropractors naturally, dog breeders in groups, teachers with class, hairdressers with style, nurses with care, optometrists with Es, bankers with interest, electricians without shorts, young farmers in wellies, plumbers with their tools, bowlers with three fingers, and conservatives with a woman on top.

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So much for the "how" of "it". The next question is, where do they do it? Answer: district nurses do it at home, pool players across the table, bankers in vaults, and anthropologists in the field. What positions do they prefer? Hikers do it on their feet, chiropodists with their feet up, surfers and board sailors standing up, and firkin boozers falling down. How often do they claim to do it? Triathletes do it three times, blood donors twice a year, and bodybuilders—real *macho* types!—do it till it hurts.

How long does it take? Hard to tell, but apparently parish clerks do it in minutes, while for the feudal aristocracy *Once a king, always a king. But once a knight is enough*. Finally, in case you wondered why people do it at all, it is claimed that birdwatchers do it for a lark, and carp society members—playing on a clever Japanese pun that links this particular fish with the sexual act—do it for love.

As if this is not enough, stickers inform us that *Taxi drivers like big tips*, *Drag racers go in harder*, *Helicopter pilots get it up quicker*, *Sail plane pilots stay up longer*, *Waitresses serve it hot*, *Welders have the hottest rods*, and *Cowboys do what cowgirls like*. Both golfers and coalminers claim to *Make better lovers*, but *Old golfers never die. They just lose their balls*, which sounds somewhat painful compared to the fate of old plumbers who *just go down the drain*, and of old fishermen who *just put their rods away*.

Various parts of the human anatomy are selected for comment in this way. If *Sandtraps are bad for your balls*, then *Rugby is a game played by men with odd shaped balls. Watch my rear, not hers*, reads one command; *Back off. I've got a sensitive bottom*, says another. It seems that for a number of men drivers *Tight butts drive me nuts*, although occasionally one of them will bemoan his lot with *I feel like a right tit*. With somewhat more self-assurance, another will proudly point to his *Vertical urge*, while yet another will boast: *Good, rich and thick . . . My milk chocolate brick*.

Clearly, it is men whose voices are here being heard. Sometimes the wording is ambivalent, as in *Love thy neighbour . . . but don't get caught*, *Had an affair lately? To know me is to love me*, and *Make love, not war. I'm married, I do both*. But the humour is definitely male-oriented in *Save a tree. Eat a beaver*, and its variants *Save a mouse. Eat a pussy* and *Snatch a kiss and vice versa*. It is men, too, who proudly advertise their *Passion wagon. Don't laugh, Your daughter may be inside*, and who order: *Tourists go home. But leave your daughters*. That the sticker discourse focuses mainly on the young can be seen in the wry *It used to be wine, women and song. Now it's beer, the old lady and TV*, and more pertinently in *Vasectomy means not having to say you're sorry*. In this context, perhaps, it is not surprising to be told to *Drive carefully, 90% of people are caused by accidents*.

So where do the results of my perambulations with Chief and my somewhat more direct route to and from university here in London leave us? Much has been written recently about *desire*, whether in advertising (Baudrillard), the text (Barthes), or language (Kristeva), while Williamson has argued that, rather than be channelled by desire into an endless and obsessive theorising about desire itself, we should look to *passion*, as the motivating object of our consumerism.

Whatever word we may wish to use (and I am not convinced that the distinction between "desire" and "passion", or "pleasure", or even—to adopt the popular Japanese concept *asobi*—"play" is valid), it should be realised that it is not just my manopause that sees cars, and the discourse that surrounds them, as sex objects. There is a whole class of objects that deal with desire, by whatever name. That these objects—cars, cosmetics, alcohol, travel—often cross-reference each other suggests, also, that there is a total *structure* of commodities that needs to be investigated, a system of objects which, in Baudrillard's words, "imposes its own coherence and thus acquires the capacity to fashion an entire society". *Life in the fast lane*, purrs an after-shave ad; *Thirst class*, gasps a beer slogan; *Mary's jet set*, claims a cosmetics company. Like GlenFiddich, this structure is frequently symbolised by the seven deadly sins of pride, envy, sloth, intemperance, avarice, ire, and lust. Is it that consumerism in the West thrives precisely because it systematically manipulates signs that are based on the Christian concept of sin?

Sometimes the symbolism is transferred to that other form of transportation that preceded the automobile—the horse. Not for nothing are the Mitsubishi Colt, the Hyundai Pony, and the Vauxhall Cavalier so named. *Ninety Horses. Stable Ride*, reads an advertisement for the Ford Fiesta, but there are horses and horses when it comes to cars. We are reminded, for example, that the Toyota Carina GL Estate *is no packhorse*. Rather, like the Jaguar XJR, it should have *racebred engineering*. In short, as the advertisement whose slogan is *You can do it in an MG* claims: "*When you're behind the wheel of an MG, you're driving a true thoroughbred*."

This idea has more recently been taken up by Isuzu as it enthuses over its "*thoroughbred Citation sports air conditioning*" (in an advertisement for its Trooper whose slogan reads: *Polo at Cowdray Park. After eight in Covent Garden*). That the so-called thoroughbred car is *Race bred for the fast lane* (Rover) can be seen in the body copy of an ad for the Dodge Colt GT Turbo, whose transatlantic blurb goes into minor ecstasy over the car's "*taut sports suspension, performance radials, a super slippery new profile and more spunk than a lot of high-ticket turbo coupes*." There is plenty enough here to recall psychoanalytic theories about girls' latency periods and the equine subconscious. Has the car then become our new "totemic ancestor"?

POSSIBLY, GIVEN advertising's capacity to make consumerism truly edible. All you need do is consider slogans like *Feast on a great American special* (Thomas Cook), *Summer is now being served* (Greek National Tourist Organisation), *You pasta your exams. Bravo, bravo* (British Telecom), *And you don't get three platefuls of spaghetti hanging out the back* (Sony) to understand that. Certainly, cars are magical objects.

> "In the exhibition halls, the car on show is explored with an intense, amorous studiousness . . . . The bodywork, the lines of union are touched, the upholstery palpated, the seats tried, the doors caressed, the cushions fondled;

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before the wheel one pretends to drive with one's whole body. The object here is totally prostituted, appropriated."

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*

They are also, like some other commodities, female fetishes. Hence, the fad for cars as "models", particularly "topless models". Ernest Dichter's now famous study for Chrysler argued that the convertible was the equivalent of a man's mistress, the sedan of his wife, and the hard top a union of the two. Hence, Dodge's *Go topless this summer* and Vauxhall's *Sitting room at the front, spare room at the back*. The mistress is young and publicly exposed; the wife private and at home. Whichever you choose, there is always an *Attractive opening for senior management* (Vauxhall Carlton), when you can *Stuff a Sherpa* (Bedford) and show that you, too, are *Every inch a beauty* (Austin). No wonder the hoardings gloatingly ask: *Are you having fun yet?* (Suzuki).

That this male desire can be and is reciprocated—even, apparently, actively controlled—is revealed in the following "review" of the movie *Christine* in *the TV Times*:

> "This is the one about the demon car and it may make you wary of walking the streets at night. Christine is a beauty all right. Red as the devil, all gleaming chrome and dazzling headlamps, playing tunes on the radio to express her thoughts. But woe betide anyone who comes between her and her young master Arnie."

The way in which "Christine" is described here reveals that in fact the car *never* controls man's desire. Instead, it is a woman-object, a *prostitute* for whose willing services men will pay.

Like the prostitute, the car is represented in this popular mythology as filled with an omnivorous sexual desire on which men can satiate themselves time and time again. The car prostitute has a *Passion for performance* (Jaguar), is *Well equipped to delight* (Nissan) and can *Deliver a rousing performance* (Toyota). It makes men fall in love: *Once driven, forever smitten* (Vauxhall); feel sexy: *Hot little number* (Toyota Tercel); excited: *We build excitement* (Pontiac); macho: *It makes you feel like the man you are* (Buick), *With huge ability* (Toyota Carina); and ready for some kind of physical climax: *The ultimate driving machine* (BMW), providing *Power to your pleasure* (Nissan). No wonder E. E. Cummings wrote a poem about driving a car in terms that suggested a man deflowering a virgin—echoed in one English bumper sticker that goes: "*If you can't get it in first . . . don't force it!*"

AS ONE WOULD EXPECT of this form of seduction which extracts meaning from discourse and thereby detracts it from its truth (Baudrillard), women can themselves become cars (and, by implication, prostitutes). Hence the following metaphors sung by Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee to an unresponsive girl:

> *Your motor ain't runnin'*
> *So I better look under your hood . . . .*

This idea is echoed in the bumper sticker *Wax her body all over*, and in a recent television commercial for the Peugeot 205, in which there is a continuous interchange of visual images between a girl and a car (whose colour is matched by the redness of her lips), together with a voice-over which croons: "*See me. Feel me. Touch me. Love me.*"

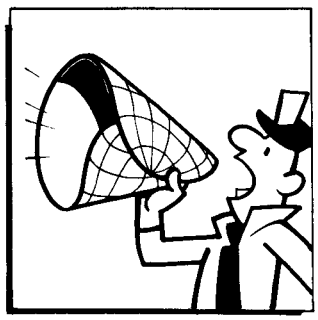
Perhaps all this is not so surprising. After all, it was women whose productive work was displaced by the arrival of the machine age, effectively making them domestic consumers. Men found themselves no longer working with people, but with machines. It was these, and consumer goods—like cars—which were themselves machines, that became a substitute for wives. Hence Ford Sierra's *Man and high-performance machine in perfect harmony*, which subtly indicates how the division of labour has obliged men to forsake their families for work. As Stuart Ewen points out in his *Captains of Consciousness*, having separated men from women in the sphere of production, the ideology of advertising brings them together through commodity-based sexuality. That, surely, is one meaning of the half-dressed woman who was made to exclaim: "*I dreamed I stopped traffic in my Maidenform bra.*"

This four-wheel discourse is itself a seductive dream—a dream about the *absence* of relations, about the void, about relations between man and women before the arrival of industrial capitalism. Ultimately, it is a seach for what went on between Adam and Eve before the Fall . . . .

Paris Notebook

By Jean-François Revel

Intellectuals in the Spotlight



WHEN WE TALK about relations between the intellectual and political worlds, we are bundling together very different sorts of behaviour. What, for example, do Aristotle, Montesquieu, and Locke, three authors of works of political philosophy from which governments still draw inspiration, have in common with writers who practise the exact opposite—deriving inspiration from an incumbent government to become its slavish propagandists? Writers, artists, and scientists are capable of backing a cause, good or bad, but that stance may have nothing to do with their creative work or with their research. Nuclear physics accounts

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for neither the Stalinism of Jean Frédéric Joliot-Curie nor the anti-Stalinism of Andrei Sakharov. With others, their stance proceeds directly from their thinking; there is an organic connection between it and their work. For good—but also for ill. Politics then sees itself as the practical application of a body of knowledge. Nazism believed itself to be based on irrefutable proof of the inequality of different races; Marxism-Leninism claimed to represent "scientific" socialism. (Incidentally, the leaders of those régimes—Lenin and Hitler, Mussolini and Brezhnev, Castro and Enver Hoxha—were and are among the most copious scribblers of the 20th century.)

But forget about that chamber of horrors for a moment. It is perfectly possible for genuine writers, great political analysts, and artists themselves to become men of action in the professional sense of the term, rather than just signing a petition or lining up behind a specific programme. It happened with Cicero, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius, and it was the case with Machiavelli, Cardinal de Retz, and Henry Kissinger. Chateaubriand and Tocqueville both held the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs; Ignace Paderewski, the famous pianist, was the first Prime Minister of the Polish Republic in 1919. Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Maurice Barrès served as members of parliament; Marie Joseph Thiers started out as an art critic, while Léon Blum began his career writing book reviews. The example of François Guizot, who achieved importance both as an historian and as a statesman, shows that it has not always been a case of writers becoming amateur politicians or of politicians becoming amateur writers.

The relations that intellectuals have with politics are in no way different from those that other people have with politics. After all, we are all intellectuals in some degree—otherwise we should not be human. And the ascending scale of possible modes of conduct, from ignominy to heroism and from stupidity to intelligence, characterises the illiterate as much as it does the Nobel Prize-winner. A "republic of teachers" would in the long run produce more disasters than a "republic of dukes" or one of "notables". The intellectual has certain extra advantages: fame, access to knowledge, the ability to sway public opinion. Where he makes good use of them, where he has judgment and courage, you get an Alexander Solzhenitsyn, a Vaclav Havel, or a Mario Vargas Llosa. Where he does not, you get. . . . I leave you to compile your own list. Let us just say that, as Vargas Llosa writes in *Contre vents et marées*,[1] when the intellectual makes a mistake, and above all when he lies, talent is not an excuse, as some people tend to plead; it is an aggravating circumstance. According to Sartre, contrary to the common, mistaken interpretation, "commitment" is not a choice but a fact. "Our passivity is itself an action", he wrote. Granted, but there are times when it does less harm than certain activities.

When an intellectual embraces active politics, he passes—to use Max Weber's terminology—from the ethics of conviction to the ethics of responsibility. In which case he ought to be judged by the latter, just like any other professional politician—indeed, just like any human being.

[1] *Contre vents et marées*. By MARIO VARGAS LLOSA. Gallimard.

Lake Chuzenji: Hints of Japan

This is a country you may fail to know,
its orthodoxies asymmetrical,
its mirrors unreflective.
You never lived here, if you did,
your shadow uninhabited.

Sun polishes lake, repeating
lacquer-master's black technique,
chipped by tricks of light.
Humble dusk will gauze it round,
leaving dull sheen there.

Our function is to journey through
pines, tan ferns and birches:
pilgrims may pause to rest and pray
by rock or shrine some deity
to render the dark lake bright.

The hierarchs of art and nature
practise a language terse
and spare as archers' breathing.
The wheel revolves and it is still;
still, it conveys us on.

Sydney Giffard

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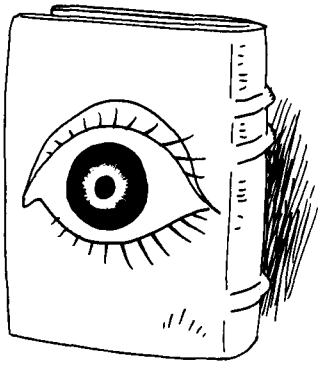
BOOKS & WRITERS

Looking with the Mind

Psychoanalysis & Literature—By MEG HARRIS WILLIAMS



HELENA'S FAMOUS definition in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—that "Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind"—is one which has been adapted as an appropriate motto for their task by both poets and psychoanalysts. In William Blake's view, the poet's goal was to "cleanse the doors of perception", until it became clear how "Mental Things are alone Real", for "where is the Existence out of Mind or Thought?", while Milton expressed it as a quest for "things invisible to mortal sight". Freud stressed how he disciplined himself to follow Charcot's advice to "look at the same things again and again until they themselves begin to speak"; and, more recently, the psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion put the same problem thus:

> "The truth—what does it look like?—Who wants to be confronted with a *trompe l'oeil* representation of Paradise? Such confections are pardonable to an agent selling us an earthly home, but not for our eternal home—our *Self*.[1]

The "mental things" which psychoanalysts, like poets, have always set themselves to observe, are the directions and tensions of mental states, waiting for the human eye to adapt to them until a pattern begins to emerge. This adaptation has always been considered to involve a type of blindness to everyday vision; or at least to be so disorienting, on first contact, that it throws other values and ways of seeing into confusion and is experienced as a blindness which can only reorganise itself into a pattern under some power outside the control of the self—such as (in traditional poetic terminology) the Muse; or (in the terms of Kleinian psychoanalytic theory) the Object, or Combined Object.

In what follows I want to take some examples from Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, and Keats to suggest that their idea of the mind (taken as a composite model) and especially their idea of inspiration are not unlike the model of the mind used in present-day psychoanalysis. What I have to say will be based on the language of what deplorable (though doubtless inevitable) jargon calls "the post-Kleinian school", though in principle I hope it applies to the general spirit of the age rather than to the restrictions of dogma. And since much psychoanalytic literary criticism arouses justifiable outrage in anyone seriously working in either field, who conclude that their ideas are merely pillaged or perverted, I should perhaps (as a literary critic) state that my psychoanalytic education has been lifelong and includes the experience of psychoanalysis as well as academic study, and that I am indebted in particular to the teaching of Donald Meltzer and Martha Harris.

What does it mean, "to look with the mind"? Indeed, what sort of entity *is* the mind? How was it envisaged by poets in pre-psychoanalytic days? How is it now envisaged, as a working model, in modern psychoanalytic practice?

Shakespeare's Antonio, in *The Tempest*, says that the idea of "conscience" is meaningless to him, since unlike a chilblain he cannot feel it: "I feel not/This deity in my bosom". The mind, like the conscience, has to be seen feelingly or it is assumed not to exist. It is often assumed today, especially by post-structuralists, that the mind does not exist as a creative agency; that there is instead a *tabula rasa* which reflects in miniature the linguistic and social assumptions current in the individual's environment.

I WAS RECENTLY accused by a publisher's reader of ignoring the academic premise that "writing is an institutionally contingent activity", and of "drawing both literary texts and psychoanalysis back into the self-enclosed, transcendent and apolitical world of 'the Mind'". This complaint seems to me typical of a widespread, prevailing anxiety about confronting what cannot immediately be explained away or what we cannot "do anything about". Nothing is more conservative and timid than the fear of appearing "outmoded" (to quote the same critic). Everyone is subject to the political, social and linguistic pressures which cushion or stifle creativity, but it is absurd to elevate their influence into the principle which governs symbolic explorations, such as those in art and psychoanalysis.

[1] William Blake, *Vision of the Last Judgement* (1810); Milton, invocation to *Paradise Lost* (1667), Book III; Sigmund Freud, "On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement" (1914), Standard Edition, vol. 14; Wilfred Bion, *Bion in New York and Sao Paulo* (1980).

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Since Wilfred Bion's classic work *Experiences in Groups* (1961), psychoanalysis has come to categorise this type of social cushioning as the "basic assumption" mentality, distinguishing it from properly "mental" activity, which is founded first and foremost on the individual's attempt to come to terms with the "truth" of his emotional experiences. These emotional states, once contained through symbol formation, become the basis for creative thinking; and the way is paved for it by "the work group"—a technical term which can refer to a network of points of view or "vertices" within the individual mind. "The work group" exists simultaneously with, but in opposition to, the "basic assumption" groupings; but even so, it is not the work group alone but the mind's internal "object" that is responsible for the existence of the thought which the mind then strives to think through—i.e. to contain symbolically. As a concept linking Kleinian theory with the religious tradition, the internal Object is the mind's personal god.

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY of thinking, which is Bion's distinctive contribution to Kleinian theory, holds that "the thought" exists, in a way analogous to Platonic innate ideas, and that it exerts emotional pressure on the mind, which then attempts to contain the thought by mobilising its apparatus for thinking. Alternatively, it may attempt to deny the thought by anti-symbolic means.

This view is a development from (and in a way, a reversal of) the Freudian theory of the unconscious or primary process as chaotic systems requiring organisation by the conscious mind. It makes use of Freud's other definition of consciousness as an organ of attention for perceiving psychic qualities; this organ of attention can then be focused on the unconscious struggle and help to translate or capture it in other symbolic terms, such as words.

The ability or failure to mobilise the apparatus for thinking depends on the individual's internal relationship between infant and mother—an ever-present feature of the inner world which has its complex roots in the chronology of early life but is nevertheless not the same thing as that historical actuality. The ability of the mind to feed from its internal Object is called "introjection" by Melanie Klein, "learning from experience" or the pursuit of "wisdom" by Bion. To the poets it is known as "inspiration".

Both psychoanalysts and poets emphasise the antithesis between this type of learning, which is the realisation of what Blake calls the "eternal Imagination", the "Divine Humanity", and spurious or imitative types under the direction of the "selfhood"—the domineering, publicity-oriented conscious self which can copy surface qualities but not make spiritual identifications. Keats's famous doctrine of Negative Capability warns us that it is impossible to "come at a truth" through always trying at it, and that it is necessary to eschew "irritable reaching after fact and reason" and learn to tolerate the sense of blindness and darkness that comes with looking with the mind; for "that which is creative must create itself".

Literature pioneered, through symbolic forms, the kind of continuing self-analysis in which knowledge itself is therapeutic, and which is the goal of any individual psychoanalysis (rather than any mythical state of cure or completion). This is what Milton meant when he stated his aspiration in terms of becoming "a true Poem" (in *An Apology for Smectymnuus*). He did not mean that he hoped one day to be perfect. The literary foundations of the modern psychoanalytic idea of the mind's capacity for development may be glimpsed in a passage such as Theseus's description in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* of how the imagination operates:

> *And as imagination bodies forth*
> *The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen*
> *Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing*
> *A local habitation and a name.*

Like many of poetry's more dazzling revelations, this analysis is often read as ironic, at least for the speaker, since he sets out to prove imagination's story "more strange than true". But Theseus, like the archetypal poet, can use words as a vehicle for expanding his understanding beyond his original preconceptions.

Words do not confine but liberate his consciousness—such is the poetic or symbolic use of words as a means of expression, in contrast to the everyday use of language for communication. In this passage, imagination is the ultimate "stranger" who often appears in literature as the bringer of some new idea, heralding a change of mental state with implications of catastrophe (here confined to the idea of "a bear" later in the speech). As Theseus speaks, he imagines how imagination, like a womb where dreams are engendered, "bodies forth" those things which are otherwise invisible to mortal sight, from the realm of Platonic ideas. There emerges the "airy nothing" which, far from being derogatory, denotes a mental space waiting to be filled with meaning.

This is a prerequisite for symbol formation, a space in which "the thought" can be contained—beautifully described in terms of Kleinian theory by means of the concepts of projection and introjection, founded on the infant's means of identification with his mother as the storehouse for infinite mind-nourishing wisdom. Those unknown, otherwise unknowable "things"—a cloud of unknowing—are then caught in mid-air by "the poet's pen" (a process which Keats called "catching Beauty on the wing"), and given sensuous form—a local habitation and a name. In Donald Meltzer's terms, the mind becomes "a theatre for the generating of meaning"; in Bion's words, "Disguised as fiction, the truth occasionally slips through".

The new awareness that discoveries made in the psychoanalytic consulting-room can be aesthetic lies behind the increasing interest of many analysts and therapists (not all of the same school) in the extent to which psychoanalysis itself is an artistic activity, an art-science in which intuition and expression can be of greater importance than explanation. For example, Robert Hobson (in *Forms of Feeling*, 1985) describes the aim or hope of a psychotherapist "to share with his patient in the creation of a language spoken with a 'true voice of feeling'. . . . The important currency of this

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language is the living symbol which has a presentational form". The modern conception of formulating an interpretation is one of achieving a description, not of explaining a hypothesis. The hope is to achieve, like Theseus, an increased dimension of meaning.

THE COMPLEX PHENOMENON known to poets as "inspiration" is the most fundamental of the metaphysical building-blocks later to be incorporated in the psychoanalytic model of the mind. I do not mean that it is an overtly acknowledged element in psychoanalytic *theory*: for many years "inspiration" has been a debased term, drained of significance, and people have found other ways of describing it. Also, the cultural impact of literature on psychoanalysis has been deep and subterranean.

Inspiration refers to the manner in which spiritual or mental vision becomes part of what Blake calls the "inward form" of the personality—the form which is seen with the mind not the eyes. It represents the moment of developmental change ("catastrophic change" in Bion's alarming terminology) during which a new idea is absorbed into the mind's structure, resulting in an increase in wisdom. This is a true metamorphosis, not merely a process of arrest and then return to the repetitive, circular flux of existence—a far more popular metaphor in contemporary literary criticism.

Blake (in *Milton*) describes the "inward form" of mental reality as a house for the passions, enabling inspiration to operate:

> *Some sons of Los surround the Passions with porches of iron and silver*
> *Creating form and beauty around the dark regions of sorrow,*
> *Giving to airy nothing a name and a habitation*
> *Delightful: with bounds to the Infinite putting off the Indefinite*
> *Into most holy forms of Thought (such is the power of Inspiration),*
> *They labour incessant, with many tears and afflictions*
> *Creating the beautiful House for the piteous sufferer.*

From one point, building the House takes 6,000 years (Blake's idea of the span of creation); but from another, it takes only one moment, or one "pulsation of the artery":

> *Every Time Less than a pulsation of the artery*
> *Is equal in its period & value to Six Thousand Years,*
> *For in this Period the Poet's work is Done, and all the Great Events of Time start forth & are conceiv'd in such a Period,*
> *Within a Moment, a Pulsation of the artery.*

This moment is the one which "Satan cannot find": the one in which the daughters of the dream-world Beulah feed the suffering sleeper "with maternal care"; it is identical with Milton's image of visitation by the Muse, in *Paradise Lost*, between the movements of sleep:

> *. . . my celestial patroness, who deigns*
> *Her nightly visitation unimplored,*
> *And dictates to me slumbering, or inspires*
> *Easy my unpremeditated verse.*

The poet always feels that the true poetic work is done not by, but for him, by those "fairy hands" (in Blake's phrase), the internal gods or the Muse. The poet provides the craftsmanlike setting for "airy nothing", but the Muse fills it with "holy forms of Thought"—with the inspired knowledge which enables the poet to feel not merely that he is creating, but that in a most fundamental sense he or his mind is *being created*.

This is what "looking with the mind" involves; it is not an activity which can be pursued with objective detachment. Understanding the poetic concept of inspiration therefore dissolves the paradox which is traditionally found puzzling: how it is that the poet can say more than he knows. For by the time he has finished writing the poem, he knows more than he knew—though it remains encapsulated within those symbolic terms. If we as readers wish to translate that knowledge into our own symbolic terms, we also have to look with our minds.

MEANWHILE, POETS are always conscious of the inadequacy of words to capture the ineffable: Milton was careful to say. "The meaning, not the name I call." More than this, they are continually haunted by the idea of the "satanic" parts of their personalities trying to destroy the true vision of the Muse and to substitute an imitative vision under the domination of the selfhood. Milton continues (in the invocation to Book VII): "For thou art heavenly, she an empty dream." The "empty dream" is the source of what Blake calls "error" and psychoanalysts call "omnipotence"—the delusion that

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the poet is master of the knowledge he presents, that he knows all there is to be known.

Shakespeare investigates the limits of omnipotence in *King Lear* and *The Tempest*. In the latter, Prospero fully experiences the emotional storm of "catastrophic change" only when Ariel (who provides the expressive meaning of all Prospero's manipulations) achieves his freedom. The dissolution of his selfhood is heralded in the magnificent "cloud-capp'd tow'rs" speech, which echoes imagery in *Antony and Cleopatra* about how "the rack dislimns" at an equivalent point of change when Antony begins to face disgrace and death (in this play, a metaphor for genuinely falling in love). Milton's Samson, likewise degraded in terms of worldly heroics and "eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves", analyses his own temptation to act the "petty god", which had devalued his original experience of inspiration ("intimate impulse"). In doing so, he gradually renews lost contact with the heavenly Muse who is present implicitly (but unvisualised) in the poem's opening words:

> *A little onward lend thy guiding hand*
> *To these dark steps, a little further on.*

Shakespeare's Leontes, in *The Winter's Tale*, similarly pays for his "tyranny" by undergoing a period of hibernation in which his internal "recreation" is carried out on his behalf by the wife and daughter whom he believes to be dead, in a re-enactment of the Persephone myth—a myth which Milton and Keats both took to be expressive of the poetic process. He is guided by the artist-as-craftsman, represented by Paulina, to the statuesque image of Hermione (Mnemosyne, the Muse), who only comes to life when the "faith" of her family is "awoken". She returns to Leontes when he learns properly to love—that is, to see with the mind not only the eyes.

THESE EXAMPLES may serve to sketch the poet's struggle between true and false art: between inspiration by the Muse and the limitations of selfhood. The theme has many variations and developments. They include investigations into delusion, perversity and lies, such as Keats's *Lamia*, or the study of perverted femininity in *Macbeth*, in which the pervading phantasy of a dead child sweeps the heroine and hero onward in the name of ambition. Psychoanalysis, likewise, has always been concerned with delusory links which impede development—with "hallucination", "bizarre objects" (Bion) or "symbolic equations" (Hanna Segal) which are the opposite of symbol-formation.

The form of the activity is always the struggle to look with the mind, not the eyes: to accept the blindness which may then be illuminated by the Muse, rather than to impose "premeditated" or preconceived solutions for fear of the emotional and aesthetic conflicts involved in the kind of writing in which the creative creates itself. The poem is the poet's child only in the sense of being the vehicle for his own mind's capacity for development. He is an explorer within the poem, directed by his relationship with the Muse, yet all the time unsure (as Keats put it) "whether the dream now purposed to rehearse/Be poet's or fanatic's"—whether the guide is heavenly or an empty dream. The poet recognises his vulnerability to the forces of cynicism and philistinism in this "blind" state, yet is upheld by faith in the possibility of a "brave new world" founded on an innocence beyond experience, an innate preconception of radiance or joy. As Milton put it in the "Nativity Ode": "Time will run back and fetch the age of gold".

THE PIONEERS of psychoanalysis were steeped in literature, and it has always fed the psychoanalytic imagination, as well as providing terminology for its technical concepts. On a deep level, indeed, the impact of great literature on psychoanalytic practice has been immense. Its significance lies not only in externals—such as the richness of dream imagery, or the ambiguities of language. Primarily, it lies at the dynamic, structural level of deep metaphor, through which the shadowy conflicts of the mind as a world of its own are implicitly figured.

Poets and artists have always explored the world of psychic reality in fictional and metaphorical terms, for the very reason that the current discursive terms and theories of their society are too limited to carry the weight of meaning which their creativity demands. Psychoanalysts and analysands likewise are aware of the constant battle not to let the analysis slip into a complacent "basic-assumption" situation or to misuse theory to maintain the status quo, but to focus with a "work group" mentality on the emotional facts they are trying to observe until "the things themselves begin to speak".

It is through this "work" activity, responding to the pressure of emotional reality, that the psychoanalytic model of the mind has developed over the years. This is not merely a political question of one school of doctrines superseding another. It represents the absorption of new discoveries; and the evolution of the psychoanalytic spirit in the Kleinian tradition, from Freud through Melanie Klein to Wilfred Bion, has been systematically traced by Donald Meltzer in *The Kleinian Development* (1978).

Early Freudian theory (which is most frequently used in academic interpretations of literature) was based on a neurophysiological model of the mind, which thought a hydrostatic circulation of psychic energies needed balancing and harmonising; the accumulation of past "reminiscences" of vestigial emotions acted as a kind of irritant, which had to be soothed and appeased in the process of adaptation to external reality and conscious reason. When used as an explanatory system, Freudian theory (removed from its live context of the "transference" relationship which Freud discovered) is inherently reductive: it results in mechanical or behaviourist interpretations of literature.

The 19th-century evolutionary view of the connection between emotion, reason and language, based on the assumed identification of mind and brain, seemed necessary at the time to give scientific status to the new discipline of psychoanalysis, but as a working model it has long been superseded both in psychoanalytic thought and in philosophical investigations into the relation between emotion and symbolic expression (as summarised, for example, in the work of Susanne Langer). Science and medicine were the

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original models for the psychoanalytic discipline, but have since been modified by the recognition of kinship with art and literature, which have always provided inspiration. This change in clinical orientation over the years since psychoanalysis began, may have been spurred by the introduction of "lay" or non-medically qualified practitioners into psychoanalytic training a generation ago.

That reflected the intuition of many psychoanalysts that the humanities should be able to provide a basis for the study of the mind which was quite as relevant as medicine. During this period "the mind" was gradually coming to be officially and theoretically regarded as a different entity from "the brain"—a distinction which had probably always been maintained in practice. As was inevitable in a developing discipline, the theoretical framework lagged behind the clinical experience in the consulting room, which continually hinted at a mental life more complex than any existing theory seemed to encompass.

Thus the existence of "the counter-transference" (the analyst's reaction to the patient's emotional transference) had been known in practice for some time before it came to be honoured in the 1950s as a useful and illuminating tool rather than a hindrance to objective observation. Similarly, a new importance was attached to the need for self-observation, bringing psychoanalysis into line with other artistic activities. The fact that Melanie Klein worked with actual children rather than with childhood "reminiscences" meanwhile revolutionised the psychoanalytic model of the mind, owing to the literalness with which children spoke of their mother's "insides", which clearly symbolised their quest for knowledge in general.

FROM THAT point onwards, psychoanalysis, like dramatic poetry, has been concerned with the ways in which inhabitants of an inner world divide and link its spaces. Mental events came to be seen not as vestigial eruptions from the past, but as present conflicts of identification with internal objects (or between internal and external objects). The Kleinian concept of "the Combined Object" or "internal parents", though derived from Freud's later structural theory of the Superego, is not a wrathful Old Testament conscience, but presides over the child's development primarily through modulating pain—the pain of the child's incapacity. Freud's idea of life and death instincts is replaced by that of grateful and envious parts of the personality. Further developments of the Kleinian model show how the Object's function in modulating pain is also one of thinking—that is, of transforming unpalatable emotions into symbols, so that they become a true part of the child's storehouse of knowledge, his own inward form—rather than filling him with "nameless dread".

Such symbols, of course, are not necessarily verbal: they can include the whole repertoire of looks, gestures, etc., through which intimacy is conveyed. Donald Meltzer stresses the aesthetic quality of the entire developmental struggle, including the recoil from the confrontation with beauty (initially embodied in the mother), which is felt by the infant knowledge-seeker (as in Plato's Cave or Dante's *Paradiso*) to be dazzling, hence possibly deceptive with regard to the goodness of its internal contents. As in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", it is uncertain whether the Muse is feeding the poet or starving him. Milton's Raphael said, "Knowledge is food"; and if Bion is right in speculating about the possible origins of mental life in prenatal existence, the child may be born with a "preconception" (equivalent to a Platonic innate idea) of the mind-feeding experience or "conception" which might confront him. All these conflicts belong to the realm of truly "mental" experience or intimate knowledge, as opposed to the socially oriented veneer of the "basic assumption".

IT IS CLEAR that there is a close congruence between the modern psychoanalytic model of the mind and that which has been expressed metaphorically by poets. The poet who is an infant voyager in the world of his own poem relinquishes his selfhood's omnipotent control over ideas—those "holy forms of thought"—and allows his "house for the passions" to become a local habitation shaped by the imagination. In this he feels guided by the instructions of the Muse or mind-feeding deity. Although assailed by doubts as to its authenticity, and fighting off temptation by "satanic" aspects of the personality, he is nevertheless encouraged by the conviction that—as Keats (or, rather, his Urn) phrased it: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty."

The Poet's ability to bring pre-conception to full realisation as conception, in symbolic form, depends upon his trusting this deity despite his personal sense of blindness. But "thought"—in the common sense of adherence to established doctrine or to political and institutional regulations—is merely one of the satanic temptations or basic assumptions, though it characteristically appears in the guise of reason or common sense (which is why Blake relegated Reason to the realms of Ulro—error). It involves a misconception, a "*trompe l'oeil* representation of Paradise".

"Mental Things are alone Real", and sub-mental assumptions are unreal in the sense that they deny the emotional reality which is the mind's food, replacing it with either travesty or perversity. Coleridge always distinguished between the mechanical accumulation of knowledge, and the vital absorption of principles by means of the "shaping spirit of imagination", or the "irradiating" reason. Items of knowledge stock the mind like a "lumber-garret": while "Princi-

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ples . . . *become the mind itself* and are living and constituent parts of it."[2]

Bion, in *Attention and Interpretation* (1970), described the goal of psychoanalysis as "an activity that is both the restoration of god (the Mother) and the evolution of god (the formless, infinite, ineffable, non-existent)". By "non-existent" he means something similar to Blake's "non-sensuous"—responsive to mental rather than physical vision. Recent developments or modifications of Kleinian theory suggest the possibility of not merely restoring but enriching the internal deity, making infinite the mind's potential for development. In the same way, the poets' ideal has always been to introject or be inspired by the Muse—not only to reach a finite goal, but to follow reparative and creative processes. "That which is creative must create itself."

[2] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, letter to James Gillman, Jr., 22 October 1826.

Travelling Bookfully

On Sedentary Globetrotting—By VICTORIA MATHER

THE VERY BEST travelling is all in the mind. Travel books should not make you want to go to a place but make you feel as if you have been there, for travel is a luxury and nothing is more luxurious than braving the desert, slogging through the jungle, and sampling the souk in the comfort of your own armchair. Travel books are not guides. Guides are for those foolish enough to venture forth in search of that hotel *isolé et tranquille* with the *vue exceptionnelle* and the *table merveilleuse (prix en conséquence)*, only to find themselves marooned at the airport. One takes hideous risks with travel-in-the-raw about which the Michelin man can do very little; with travel by the book someone else has taken the risks for you. And survived to tell the tale.

The finest travel book of the 1980s was Redmond O'Hanlon's *Into the Heart of Borneo*,[1] in which the intrepid naturalist (a director of the fashion house Annabelinda) covers himself in super-strength insect repellent and, with James Fenton, tackles one of the last unspoilt paradises on earth. This is a serious natural history journey which Eric Newby has generously described as "the funniest travel book I have ever read". Confronted with 1,700 different species of parasitic worm, amoebic and bacillary dysentery, yellow, blackwater and dengue fevers, malaria, cholera, rabies, hepatitis, and Wagler's pit viper, few of us would stir from that armchair. Mr O'Hanlon, however, is up and out of the door—armed with Hose's *Field-book of a Jungle-Wallah* (1929), and advice from the SAS ("You won't want to nancy about in shorts once the first leech has had a go at you") and John Hatt, author of *The Tropical Traveller* (1982), who recommended taking *lots* of postcards of the Queen ("preferably on horseback. . . . because they think she's all of a piece"), waterproof digital watches, and gym shoes ("because in the longhouse you will have to dance every night").

This alone is a pearl beyond the price of the paperback. Had I known that natives dressed in hornbill feathers would haul me to my feet in the longhouse, nothing would have induced me to accept Speedbird Travel's kind invitation to venture into the heart of darkness. Unfortunately, I only read Redmond O'Hanlon on the aeroplane.

It is humour combined with the consummate professionalism of the gifted amateur that is the charm of O'Hanlon's book. Here are two superbly English Englishmen having an absolutely ripping adventure; in among the crutch-rot powder and 166 known species of snake is more swash and buckle than one thought possible in 1983. Above all, these are intelligent travellers, armed with Autan and erudition, who treat what they find with delightful astonishment and decent respect. And so the adventure comes to us fresh and new—painted in the most vivid colours.

The trouble with most travel writing is that it is deadly dull. The idea seems to be that anyone who has been anywhere can write about it, provided a "factpack" is tacked on the end; the result is more about the lavatories than the locals. And so the most promising travel books are not strictly travel books at all, but memoirs of rich and strange places written by people who actually lived there rather than viewing the country from the eighth floor of a Hotel Intercontinental.

On 16 September 1947 the Browns left their chalet-bungalow in Patcham, in a second-hand American Dodge Desert Command car, and drove to Africa. Robin Brown, then aged nine, "could hardly talk about the trip at all for fear of the ridicule I would suffer if. . . we ended up going to Bognor". At the time of departure the Brown family had never been further afield than Devon, the Germans having proved a tiresome deterrent to tourism. In the winter of 1946, when the sea froze around Brighton and coal was not to be had, even for ready money, Edith Brown had written a letter to her friend Flossie in Bristol saying, "Awful weather—feel like emigrating?"

Preparations included a trip to the Automobile Association (route cards) and to a Piccadilly outfitters where Mrs

[1] *Into the Heart of Borneo*. By REDMOND O'HANLON. Penguin, £4.99.

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Brown bought four solar topees. Further equipped with war-surplus bell-tents, trenching tools, ground-sheets, and a great number of tinned pilchards, the Browns—together with Flossie and her husband—set off for the Dark Continent. Their minds, as Gerald Durrell points out in his introduction to *Bye Bye Shangri La*,[2] were "unclouded by knowledge".

ROBIN BROWN's memoir is not in the same league as Durrell's *My Family and Other Animals* but the first half, dealing with the journey from Patcham to Marseille, to Mombasa and then across the Masai steppe to Rhodesia, has an appropriate sense of wonder. There is nothing like a child's eye for perceiving extraordinary events with deadpan nonchalance. Thus, keeping live eels in the hotel wash-basin in Marseille is viewed as a perfectly sensible means to a satisfactory dinner cooked on a Primus stove; collecting mambas, spitting cobras, and puff-adders is a Rhodesian child's fad on a par with the hula-hoop or roller skates. Salisbury Snake Park paid a few pence for his catch, and Robin's enterprise throve until his father, peering into a likely sack to use for garden rubbish, was horrified to find that it contained two expiring puff-adders, and forbade the whole business.

There is a rather touching description of the Rex Hotel in Mombasa, where the Browns spent their first night in Africa and were overwhelmed by the buffet, consisting of a "huge bowel [shurely shome mishtake?] of great pink shrimps balanced on their heads, guarded by a three foot ice swan" and ragout of eland *maison* (Robin had read about eland in *Jock of the Bushveld*). By the time the Browns have been through the buffet—the whole lobsters and the roast beef "wheeled in on a silver hearse"—one remembers that this was a family fresh from six years of rationing. Master Brown was just savouring his first banana.

Coming from a world of deprivation into hot colourful Africa, lush with guavas and grenadillas, garlands of bougainvillaea, frangipani, and pushy red-and-yellow zinnias, made the experience all the more intense. "My father took up his glass and waved it at Africa. 'Cheers,' he said, jubilantly. Africa, however, was not to be drawn." The Browns were certainly more impressed by Africa than Africa was by them. They came to treat the continent as an untamed, hotter version of Patcham; and their ingenuousness gradually becomes irritating, a rather ghastly example of latter-day English colonialism. What has seemed merely quaint on the journey—"You can't go wrong unless the road has been washed away"—frazzles out into Mother's bad-tempered diary entries as the going gets tough: "Drove to the forest to eat but left, frightened of the natives. Not happy in this nasty country."

Their first impression of Rhodesia is very far from Shangri-La: "Real dump. One street town. Hotel grim", writes Mother as they steam into Broken Hill, home town of Roy Welensky. They have, in fact, driven through a fantastic natural phenomenon: the migration of the great herds of the Masai Mara. "There is no evidence", writes Robin Brown, "that my parents realized that the route they had chosen was Africa's most prolific game trail, or that we were pioneers along a route which in the years ahead would attract the richest tourists in the world."

It is while recounting this journey that Brown's pleasant, child's vision of events becomes tempered by the views of the grown-up naturalist and conservationist (he is now the producer of the *Nature Watch* television series). But he is not a clever enough writer to make his points about the ecological disaster that has taken place in Africa by leaving well alone. So the travel experience becomes a rather tiresome lecture—and we armchair travellers dislike being harangued.

The magic of *My Family and Other Animals* is that Durrell remains in his childhood character throughout; there is no nonsense about how package tourists have ruined Paleokastritsa. It also has to be said that, through no fault of her own, Edith Brown is not a fully-fledged eccentric on the scale of Mother Durrell.

The result is rather dreary and suburban, which is precisely what one was always led to believe about the British who went to Rhodesia. Kenya was for the raffish aristocrats; Rhodesia for the lower middle classes who could not afford servants at home in Croydon. Or Chobham. Or Patcham. Or anywhere with an Acacia Avenue. The answer was to take the values of the Avenue to a place where the park benches were stencilled "Whites Only". "We made no attempt whatsoever", writes Robin Brown, "to explore or even concede the existence of a whole complex African culture which governed the lives of the Africans of Shangri-La, nor did we give a passing thought to the damage we were doing to them."

ROBIN BROWN's intentions are doubtless admirable, but the lacklustre way in which he whinges about the white man's culpability is infinitely less effective than Daphne Anderson's moving autobiography, *The Toe-Rags*.[3] This merciless account of unremitting prejudice and ignorance in pre-War Southern Rhodesia is told, once again, through the eyes of a child. Her parents (not to mention her Aunt Betty, who dispenses boiling poultices and abortions with equal lack of discrimination) effortlessly qualify as some of the most unpleasant people in literature. Her mother ran away with "Uncle Bob" when Daphne was four, leaving her, and her brother and sister, with a young Mashona boy, Jim, who fed them for two days before taking the children to the local police station. He was dismissed for his pains because Daphne's father, summoned reluctantly from the city to reclaim his progeny, considered Jim "only a bleedin' kaffir".

It was only the blacks and the nuns who showed Daphne any of those small kindnesses of which childhood should be full. Without Jim she would have starved, since her father's visits to the family homestead appear to have been intermittent. Without Vinyu, the servant at her aunt's, she would

[2] *Bye Bye Shangri-La*. By ROBIN BROWN. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £14.95.

[3] *The Toe-Rags*. By DAPHNE ANDERSON. André Deutsch, £14.95.

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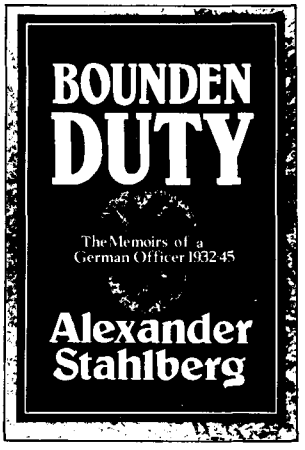

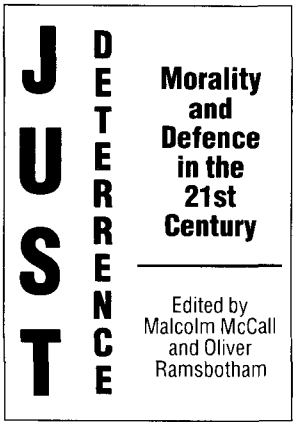

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have had no clothes in which to go to school; he firmly ordered two sets from an Indian tailor, to be placed on Aunt Betty's bill. Without the nuns at her convent, Daphne would have had no education, or encouragement to learn. A bright child, she was condemned with her brother to live in the kitchen because her aunt considered her "only a little toe-rag". Her sister, the refined Stella, lived the life of the drawing-room, joining the adults in jeering at her brother and sister for speaking Shona better than English (when the only person who spoke to them was the native cook) and for eating African food (they were offered no other).

Their father was an ignorant, foul-mouthed Cockney, whose favourite word was "nigger"; sexual abuse of the two girls is hinted at but is too dark an area even for Mrs Anderson's compelling honesty in recalling a childhood of wrenching misery. Never once does her loveless story succumb to sentimentality; and the simplicity of the telling makes the numerous indignities all the more poignant. This was a child in whom so little interest was taken by her own family that it was left to a neighbour to de-louse her.

"There were maggot-fly eggs under the skin, and because they itched a lot I had been unable to stop scratching and here and there were raw, bleeding patches which I hoped [Mrs Smith] would not see. Hot water liberally laced with the ubiquitous Jeyes Fluid was applied, and then she ran her thumb across my scalp, squirting out the white wriggling worms. She curled her lip in disgust but did not stop until she had removed all the parasites. . . . No more was said, but I cried, not from what I'd undergone but for shame. . . ."

An armchair traveller relishes the ways in which a gifted writer can convey the authentic flavour of a country (perhaps travel works by the less gifted could be beefed up by scratch 'n' sniff editions). Daphne Anderson gives us a complete sense of place and of a society.

This is not the suburban *Angst* of Robin Brown's colonialism, but something more indigenous and unpleasant: the world of the poor whites, of the plumply prosperous, and of the losers, who subsist but still have a "Boy", which makes them one better than their equivalent "back home". The aunt's money was earned by natives pitifully paid at her brick factory and accommodated in scanty tents where they regularly died of tuberculosis. Africa is a cruel country and in Daphne Anderson's book that cruelty is of the different breeds of human being towards each other.

> "Don't cry, I still love you, but you must realise I could never marry you now [says Daphne's first fiancé, having heard a rumour that her mother was Coloured]. I don't want a lot of coffee-coloured children. Blood will always tell. Perhaps you ought to consider leaving Bulawayo before the story gets out."

Anecdote and detail like this make Mrs Anderson's account a telling social observation. Getting under the skin of the country, it is far more revealing than any really lovely scenery guff.

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[4] *India File*. By TREVOR FISHLOCK. John Murray, £8.95.

TREVOR FISHLOCK's *India File*, now in a new edition,[4] is an admirable example of subcutaneous travel writing. In 1980 Fishlock entered "one of the world's great dramas: a vast and crowded land committed to the most formidably challenging exercise in mass democracy"—he had become *The Times* correspondent in Delhi. Three years later, his British Press Award citation said that his reports reflected "a deep understanding of the country combined with descriptive powers of a high order". He did what the majority of foreign correspondents, travel writers and travellers fail to do: he talked to locals. *India File* is a cornucopia of astrologers and bandits and godmen. Armed with an ancient Hindi phrasebook containing the polite way of saying, "Your breastplate is dirty, the lock of your musket is rusty" and "A sepoy shot himself", Fishlock went forth and listened at the keyhole of the country.

He was there when Manbhar, a farm worker's wife, was given a chit for £5.50 for having been sterilised. She had walked six miles across the brown Rajasthan desert to the clinic in the village school, where a doctor tied her tubes with "the magic telescope", having been persuaded that the laparoscopy was "so quick and efficient that she would be home in time to cook the evening meal, and fit enough to work in the fields next day". One doctor whom Fishlock witnessed in Uttar Pradesh sterilised women at the rate of one a minute: that meant clamping the tubes of 605 women in eleven hours. "I am not a machine", said Dr Usha Sharma: "I am a mother myself and I feel compassion for all the women I operate on. They want me to lift the greatest burden of their lives and sometimes they come to me and beg me to help them."

FISHLOCK'S observation is acute, his judgment shrewd, his affection for and knowledge of the seething sub-continent making us understand and laugh with, rather than at, the extraordinary workings of the jewel in the crown, where the English legacy includes several Ladies and Giants Tailors and nursery puddings. "India is perhaps, the last refuge of the freshly made British pudding. In India belts may still be freed a notch for spotted dick, plum duff, jam rolypoly, upside down pudding. . . ." He regrets that this particular remnant of the Raj "may be fading away. Cooks will no longer pipe the words Merry Grimmus on Christmas cakes whose memorised ingredients are a link with Mrs Beeton."

Fishlock penetrated the snooty Ooty Club in Ootacamund (where snooker was invented) in the hill resort whose British-built homes still bear the names Woodbriar, Runnymede, and Bideford. He unravelled the intricacies of the Bombay Union of Tiffin Box Suppliers, a formidable infrastructure of lunch pails, prepared by Bombay wives at home, which every day make their way via a *dabbawallah* to the desks of 100,000 office workers in the city.

This is compulsive stuff. How can one resist an author who does what one would never dare to do oneself—look in the complaints book at the Ooty Club? "*The peas contained live worms. This completely upset the appetite of the table*", and "*Can't something be done about the fire in the Mixed Bar? In windy weather the fire erupts clouds of smoke, covering members in a carpet of ash*". One imagines them all per-

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fectly preserved, *à la* Pompeii, in a different way of life.

It will be a determined soul who trudges through *Domestic Life in Palestine,* a blameless work written in the 1850s by Mary Eliza Rogers.[5] She spent many years with her brother at the British Consulate in Damascus and certainly took an intelligent interest in all about her, but by page 201 I began to wonder how much I really needed to know about Bedouin bread-making. "This most likely was the same sort of bread which Sarah of old made for strangers, in obedience to Abraham's vision. . . ." A little prose like this goes a very long way but is unlikely to make the traveller wish to do the same.

Paul Rambali's *French Blues*[6] is not as good as he thinks it is. The former pop critic of *New Musical Express* and deputy editor of *The Face* has written a pop criticism of modern France splattered with discussions of hyper-reality with Jean Baudrillard, dinner with Christian Lacroix, and a limo ride with Beatrice Dalle. Wow, man.

He does, however, provide some of the detail that makes *India File* so rewarding. Did you know that Jacques Chirac sent motorbike-mounted hoovers out on to the streets of Paris to suck up the dog turds? Or that the highest ratings on French TV last year were for a show called *Sexy Follies*, in which male contestants fondle the breasts of a row of topless girls in order to identify their girlfriends? There you are, then. The book has the robust energy of a *Sun* feature on "20 Things You Didn't Know About the Frogs". It is completely modern, with not *a château* or art gallery in sight, and Rambali travels purposefully with his nose in the gutter. The blue-overalled Frenchman with his glass of wine, loaf of bread, and a slice of *saucisson* is, we are told, pure Hovisland. How sad—the book is like having peeped under silk skirts and found dirty knickers.

An armchair traveller might well not consider Mr Rambali's France worth leaving home for, but is there any travel book that can truly inspire the sedentary globetrotter with confidence? Most assuredly yes—that classic gem *Venice For Pleasure*, by J. G. Links.[7] He has an excellent sense of priorities ("The first 19 rooms of the Accademia can be done in half an hour by any traveller with sound limbs. . ."), and his peregrinations through Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese are informed, delightful, and anecdotal. One finishes the Accademia with the sense of a job well done. "We can take no more beauty and fortunately there is little left to take . . . . There is now nothing between us and that café on the Grand Canal." Aaah, *this* is a man who understands the importance of sitting down.

[5] *Domestic Life in Palestine*. By Mary Eliza Rogers. KPI Ltd., £12.95.
[6] *French Blues*. By Paul Rambali. Heinemann, £11.95.
[7] *Venice for Pleasure*. By J. G. Links. The Bodley Head, £5.95.

High Culture

The BBC's Third Programme—By Geoffrey Heptonstall

The meaning of "public service broadcasting" has never been agreed, except by the benevolence of a broad consensus, when there was such a thing in informed hearts and minds. But, as the world knows, the BBC represents more than broadcasting. Establishing an early reputation as a model of honesty in reportage and of solid content in general programming, it soon became perhaps *the* voice and symbol of the national culture. It was thought of as greater than its output, deserving respect as much for what it was as for what it did.

It is true, however, that standards of excellence in all areas of broadcasting have long characterised the BBC. One of the virtues of the post-War consensus was that definitions were assumed by unspoken agreement in ways barely imaginable today. The supreme instance of this was the Third Programme, established in 1946.

The "Third" was not a "programme", but a broadcasting channel intended to take the more demanding of radio's output and without concessions to the idea of general access. Integral to the BBC, it was set apart from the mainstream of the Corporation, for this was radio as high culture. Some would say—some did say—that the Third was too exclusive to be a public service. Others felt that an educated public was being served, and had a right to expect such a service; and that the general listening public might benefit.

Sir Harold Nicolson—a BBC governor—had complained in wartime of a poetry programme which dished out verse "like castor oil". The Third was established with the conscious intention *not* to patronise. The assumption was that a discriminating audience existed and was likely to broaden its base in the peacetime world of new social opportunities.

The Third, the highest excellence, was born out of the struggle against the resurgent barbarism which was confirming Lord Keynes's belief that civilisation is a very thin crust. And yet in wartime, "*Ici Londres*" held better than the Maginot Line. Culture in wartime acquired a special urgency—hence the success of Cyril Connolly's magazine *Horizon*. Because radio reaches so far, the BBC was the

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most penetrating of all the advocates. Dylan Thomas reading his verse attracted the attention accorded in a previous age to Dickens—he spoke for the way people wanted to feel. His ornate language created a special sense that life was richer than rationing and utility furniture.

One of his producers, George Orwell, wrote of the experience in "Poetry and the Microphone" (still a required text), making the essential point that because such work was not seeking a mass audience as a priority it could afford to make exceptional demands on the listener's attention. There was no need to fear that some material might leave anyone behind.

One might add that it is better to demand more—though not too much more—from an audience than it expects. Thomas, in any case, made nonsense of categories by commanding a large audience. If T. S. Eliot was a minority taste then, it is possible now—as I write this—for *The Waste Land* to be read on the general radio network. Such absorption into the mainstream can occur only where there has been experimental territory confident of its purposes.

When this confidence was possible, an organ like the Third was possible. There was a time when high culture was accepted as self-evidently valid. The idea of discrimination and hierarchy was not discredited by the insistent wishful-thinking of social evangelists.

THE THIRD'S benign patriarch was a remarkable journalist who in 1946 had been with the BBC only three years. A self-educated Anglo-Frenchman, Sir William Haley had enough distance from conventional career-patterns to allow him the independence of mind from which new ideas are made. This, combined with the rational culture of a *Times* newspaperman, made him the ideal progenitor of a serious, eclectic, experimental network. It became, as Haley intended, an influence on broadcasting throughout the world.

That is not to say that Haley sought to underwrite the values of an élite, still less of a coterie. He believed in a pyramid of aspirations. A listener might hear a tune played by a dance band on the light music channel. Tuning to the general network he would hear an extract from its symphonic source. And then he could find himself led to the entire work on the Third.

It was a noble ideal, which may have been true to experience on occasion. But it misread the nature of popular culture which has its own references and values. Entertainment is not usually a more accessible version of high art. It can be so, but such instances tend to be rare, and flawed.

An understanding of this was inherent in the BBC's original ethos. The Third was a radical departure from the thinking of Sir John Reith, the Corporation's austere—yet undeniably great—founder. He argued in favour of a common culture within an informed democracy, a culture seeking the highest common factor within a framework of traditional values. Reith was a true son of the Kirk.

Reith and Haley did share common ground in believing that the new generation of peacetime was a heartland available for cultivation. Their version of public service broadcasting sought to educate a nation.

The question today is whether the Third could ever be more than an experiment. Its successor is mainly a serious music network, which ought not to require any justification. But the Third had its own cultural identity, allowing as much time to "literature"—including talk—as to music. It sought a status and reputation equal to the great magazines. Is that possible in a mass medium? Is it desirable?

If it is possible, it is probably desirable. The uncertainty about the future of broadcasting in Britain, and the continuing debate about the meaning and purpose of culture in society, make any conclusion both tentative and open to misinterpretation. And yet an answer has to be given.

IN HER HISTORY of the spoken output of the Third, Kate Whitehead—a BBC producer of later vintage—asks what went wrong.[1] That presumes the Third did fail. It eventually gave way to Radio 3 (the music channel); but failure is a subjective notion. The polemical tone of her brief preface has led to some misunderstanding of her thesis. In the body of the text she is more considered, and superbly informed. The Third had its limitations, and a limited life (1946-70), but it was necessary and at least in part successful. As a mass educator, certainly, the Third was bound to "fail". Kate Whitehead rightly observes that its patrician ideal was eroded by the actual effects of a confident democracy. But much criticism of the Third—and there was wide hostility—was not aimed at its educative ideals, but at its supposed "élitism", actually the reverse of Haley's intention. Some such criticism was obviously philistine. A reductive dismissal of high culture was a particularly offensive note struck in the popular press. (Supposed liberals who freely apply the guillotine cut of "élitist" might consider this.)

The idea that the Third appealed only to a coterie of "culture-vultures" can be dismissed with a straightforward reference to the facts. Kate Whitehead offers the very telling evidence that about a third of the audience was involved in manual labour. Given that a quarter of the population at some time tuned into the Third, it is demonstrably untrue that it appealed only to the higher social echelons, still less true that it was the house network of a latter-day Bloomsbury Group. The Third was not the precious irrelevance its opponents claimed. Within terms of reasonable expectations, it was a success.

The fact that Kate Whitehead's book is a literary history, and therefore excludes half the output, the music, has been seen as dismissive. In fact, most of the music it broadcast was pre-existing—whereas the literature was usually commissioned work. As a patron, if not as an educator, the Third had a striking record. In retrospect, it is astonishing how much drama of world class calibre began on the Third. And yet, if Kate Whitehead is right, the then Head of Radio Drama, Val Gielgud (brother of Sir John), had no sympathy for experimental or minority work. Although brilliant in presenting stage classics and guiding popular successes, like "Saturday Night Theatre", new serious radio work left him cold.

[1] *The Third Programme: A Literary History*. By KATE WHITEHEAD. Oxford University Press, £25.00.

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This is both sad and bewildering. Surely, radio drama needs to be seen as a substantive cultural form? Although its labellings are borrowed from the theatre, resemblances can prove deceptive. Its concentrated intimacy with the individual listener gives it a texture in common with fiction or poetry; and the characteristic radio drama has a strong narrative tone. This has gained general acceptance in recent years, largely as a result of the Third. Of the many performers attracted to it the greatest was, not surprisingly, Richard Burton. It was his restraining command that gave such authority to the fantastic pastoral dalliance of *Under Milk Wood*.

As Kate Whitehead recognises, it was Douglas Cleverdon, the play's director, who had the idea of getting Dylan Thomas to marshal his abilities and turn the reminiscent tone of his work into a sustained piece. Tellingly, *Under Milk Wood* was a product of the Features Department—subsequently disbanded—and not of the Gielgud domain.

The progress of *Under Milk Wood* beyond the Third and beyond radio is well known. The Third can also take credit for encouraging Samuel Beckett even before *En Attendant Godot*, against opposition from a predictable quarter. It took up Harold Pinter, after some rejection; and it was crucial to Tom Stoppard's development, although his first dramas were taken by commercial television—a point which probably illustrates the general effect the Third had on broadcasting.

Kate Whitehead omits the case of Joe Orton, whose interesting, if derivative *A Ruffian on the Stair* really was taken out of nowhere. Until John Tydeman (still an innovative force) recommended Orton for acceptance, that weirdly brilliant writer had endured years of total obscurity. I know of no comparable case: every discovery usually has a pre-history of publication somewhere. That alone surely justifies an area of broadcasting at a safe distance from the mainstream.

Although many writers were encouraged by the Third, few concentrated on radio. Much of the arts programming on British television in the last twenty years has been guided by directors who gained experience on the Third, including the novelist Melvyn Bragg. But it would be a disservice to the medium to justify its existence solely as a clearing-house for stage and screen. Going beyond sound radio need not mean going higher. Bill Naughton's *Alfie*, first heard on the Third, is a work of sharp observation—and of large contemporary interest, to judge by its success on stage and film. The narrative voice suggests that its radio original was still more enriching.

The Third's respect for literature may be seen in the eventual rise of P. H. Newby, the novelist who became the network's Controller. His colleagues over many years included the poets Louis MacNeice and George MacBeth, and the novelist Rayner Heppenstall. At the time MacNeice was cricitised for wasting his talent. Not everybody today would agree.

IT IS BEYOND Kate Whitehead's brief to offer critical appraisal of programme content: her book is a history of the working structure and its ethos. As must be clear by now, there are some contentious matters of internal politics. These are unavoidable, and they have their relevance to current debates. At a critical time for the BBC—facing new and uncertain challenges—contentious matters require a delicacy of approach which may be incompatible with independence of mind. However, it would be foolish to read hidden meanings into innocuous comment . . . .

Whether high culture will ever become majority experience is purely conjectural. One can instance cases—some are cited above—which signify acceptance into the mainstream. But that is not to justify any notion of art as a social prescription. The idea of a common culture was well-argued in the time of the old liberal consensus. But it proved to be a naive optimism which has collapsed into a cultural vacuum. There is confusion—and fear. Yet fear may prove groundless, if there is no further loss of nerve.

Some of the confusion may indeed be the means to a solution. It is possible now for the BBC's serious music channel to broadcast Jerome Kern's *Showboat*, while the light music channel simultaneously carries Handel's *Messiah*. There may come a time when the categories of high and low give way to a looser—and more creative—structure without loss of quality. If that is so, the ghost of William Haley will be smiling.

Kate Whitehead's own conclusion is the interesting observation that Britain is moving into a culture of minorities. This needs detailed consideration and careful debate. It reads like a challenge to the liberal consensus mind, but may be an unavoidable reality. Broadcasting until now has sought a common core of experience, often based on the family. This no longer seems a valid future. The audience of one, the audience of the sectional interest, is likely to predominate.

Were whole parts of society abandoned entirely to the commercially-manipulative culture of sensationalist trivia, the cost to our social fabric would be immense. We need standards. We need values. We need the high culture which once was the Third Programme and may now be found more generally. For which relief, much thanks.

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Books Encountered

Mad or Bad? By MICHAEL BAVIDGE. Bristol Classical Press, £14.95, paper £4.95.

Patient exploration of moral responsibility *v.* derangement in, e.g., psychopathic crime: not legal or medical, but philosophical, in the *Mind Matters* series edited by Judith Hughes, with a Foreword by Mary Midgley. While sensible and rational, it gives due scope to repugnance. Mad *and* Bad, it virtually concludes.

A Matter of Passion: Letters of Bernard Berenson and Clotilde Marghieri. Edited by DARIO BIOCCA. University of California Press, $25.00, £14.95.

Elegantly printed and bound selection from 1,600 letters between Berenson and his novelist friend, each long married to someone else. Edith Wharton, Katherine Mansfield and others flit in and out. Of Rosamund Lehmann, the editor says: "Influenced by Henry James, her writing focuses on the world as seen during childhood and adolescence." H'm.

Minds, Brains, and Machines. By GEOFFREY BROWN. Bristol Classical Press, £14.95, paper £4.95.

Further short volume in the *Mind Matters* series, inquiring "Can machines think?" Despite the author's computer expertise he posits consciousness and sentience as prerequisites, though not denying the (low-grade) thought functions already possible. Major road ahead.

The New American Writing: Essays on American Literature since 1970. Edited by GRAHAM CLARKE. Vision Press, £20.95.

The editor supplies a preface and an essay on Raymond Carver. Henry Claridge discusses Doctorow; Peter Doughty, Toni Morrison; Eric Mottram, Don DeLillo; David Seabrook, Gordon Lish; A. Robert Lee, the "Ethnic Renaissance"; and Julian G. Hurstfield, crime fiction. Patchy, especially the last: but stimulating.

Art or Bunk? By IAN GROUND. Bristol Classical Press, £14.95, paper £4.95.

Starting from Carl André's *Equivalent VIII* (120 unworked fire-bricks arranged in a rectangle, for which the London Tate Gallery paid £4,000 in 1972), the author writes cagily, using irony rather than logic and passion to question bunk art, and leaving the reader wiser but cross.

Letters to an Editor. Edited by MARK FISHER. Carcanet, £14.95. The addressee is Michael Schmidt: the correspondents include C. H. Sisson, Donald Davie, Octavio Paz, George Barker. Litbiz, gossip, and criticism make the book a "Jackdaw-style" history of Carcanet and the *PN Review*.

The Return of Cultural Treasures. By JEANETTE GREENFIELD. Cambridge University Press, £32.50, $44.50.

Beautifully illustrated, abundantly documented, cogently argued survey, with airline-style maps showing how art-objects have whizzed around the globe. Conclusions: history and aesthetics justify the return of some treasures; politics clouds the picture; law is needed against new theft.

Nationalism and International Society. By JAMES MAYALL. Cambridge University Press, £25.00, $34.50.

Sharply written argument that "the primacy of the national idea . . . has modified the traditional conception of an international society but has not replaced it" and that "there is no immediate prospect of transcending the national idea". The author concedes "islands of supra-national authority", but the book and its bibliography virtually ignore recent developments in Europe.

The Genius of the System: Hollywood Film-making in the Studio Era. By THOMAS SCHATZ. Simon & Schuster, $24.95, £16.95.

Meagrely illustrated but well researched history of Warner, MGM, Universal and Selznick from the 1920s to 1960: an opened-out version of Philip French's *The Movie Moguls*. Amazing omissions include *Singin' in the Rain*.

Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style. By DEBORA L. SILVERMAN. University of California Press, $39.95, £19.95.

Brilliantly evocative but also analytical study of what Germany knew as the *Jugendstil* and Italy as the *stile Liberty*, going beyond Guimard's métros and Rodin's *Gates of Hell* to explore the ideological implications and aspirations—sinuous, smoky, feminine, introspective, psycho-analytical, etc.

Letters of Leonard Woolf. Edited by FREDERICK SPOTTS. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £30.00.

Informatively edited selection (600 out of 8,000), including all those to Virginia Woolf and about her mental troubles, plus politics and the Hogarth Press. Freud, Strachey, Wells, Peggy Ashcroft: the net spreads wide.

The Hidden Damage. By JAMES STERN. Chelsea Press, £17.95.

Reissue of marvellous 1947 book on post-War Germany, inspected by the author with W. H. Auden. Vivid, lively reporting; a compassionate, shocked eye; keenly recalled conversations; the unrecreatable detail of Edmund Wilson's *Europe without Baedeker* and Spender's *European Witness*.

Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India. By GAURI VISWANATHAN. Faber and Faber, £20.00.

A rather slewed reading of British colonial education policy, arguing that literary study was used to subject Indians, at first assisting Christian missionary activity, later renouncing religion to promote cultural hegemony. Useful sidelight; but the whole story contained good intentions.

War and the Image of Germany: British Academics 1914-1918. By STUART WALLACE. John Donald, £20.00.

Study of what Professor Geoffrey Best called "garrison intellectuals"—dons whose minds were in many cases "nationalised" by World War I. Useful chapters on Gilbert Murray, Lowes Dickinson, and Bertrand Russell (whose pacifism got him dismissed from his lectureship at Trinity, Cambridge).

The Certainty of Literature: Essays in Polemic. By GEORGE WATSON. Harvester/Wheatsheaf, £25.00.

Witty, learned, commonsensical, Johnsonian rebuttal of (until recently) fashionable efforts to discredit objectivity in history and criticism, arguing that much "critical theory" is too uncritical. Two of the essays appeared in ENCOUNTER. Had we but space enough and time.

Absent Friends. By GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT. Hamish Hamilton, £15.95.

Heart-warming, searching, candid reminiscences of 22 now dead acquaintances as well as friends, ranging from Gareth Bennett (of *Crockford* ill-fame: excellent) to Mark Boxer (adequate) and Goronwy Rees (better than TV travesties, but still no definitive appraisal). Truly civilised prose.

The Van Gogh Files: A Journey of Discovery. By KEN WILKIE. Souvenir Press, £14.95.

Catchpenny title: gossipy account of fascinating legwork, revealing Van Gogh's Lambeth first love, his and his brother's probable syphilis, and his sad end.

R.M.

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DISCUSSION

What is "Soviet"–What is "Russian"?

A Conversation between ADAM B. ULAM & GEORGE URBAN

1. The Heart of the Darkness

GEORGE URBAN: *Much confusion and considerable resentment have been caused in Sovietological discussion by the cavalier use of the words "Soviet" and "Russian" as interchangeable adjectives. Those who believe with Alexander Solzhenitsyn that the Communist system is of Western provenance and has been imposed on the Russian people are profoundly offended. Others say that Russian traditions and political culture are so strongly woven into the fabric of Soviet Communism that it is nonsensical to search for a clear distinction. Far from being a matter of mere semantics, the quarrel touches upon the very nature—the durability and changeability—of the Soviet system.*

If "Soviet" did correctly apply to all things Russian, then we in the West would be inclined to take a harsher view of Russian society than we would if we were persuaded that "Soviet" and "Russian" were not only ***not*** *coterminous, but were clearly antithetical. In other words, we could either say that the Soviet system was as alien to the Russian nation as it has shown itself to be to Poles, Czechs and Hungarians, and shape our policies accordingly. Or we could say that the Soviet system was what the Russian people have sustained and defended for seven decades, and shape our policies to fit that view.*

Where do you stand in this conflict?

ADAM ULAM: In everyday parlance the two are used interchangeably. This may be wrong but it is done, and I feel that not to do so would be pedantic. I prefer to make a distinction whenever clarity demands that we should; but it would be pretentious not to say "Soviet" for "Russian" and vice versa, occasionally. In most cases it is perfectly clear what we are talking about—whether we say "Russian" or "Soviet".

—I would have thought Communism would have resulted in a very different system if Marx's ideas had been put into effect in Italy or Holland rather than Russia—

ULAM: Yes, it would. . . .

—And it is, therefore, difficult to deny that the Soviet system carries the birthmarks of Russian traditions and culture. Wouldn't this argue for a very thin distinction between "Soviet" and "Russian"?

ULAM: It's difficult to deny the strength of the Russian component. Let us, however, also remember that the Russian origins of the Soviet system have been used—by sympathisers and apologists on the Left—to underline the grave imperfections of the Russian realisation of Marxism, and to argue that, but for those origins, Marxism would have had a better chance to produce an acceptable model with appeal throughout the world. In either case, the conjunction between the corruptions of the Soviet system and the backwardness of Czarist Russia from which it arose is broadly recognised—whether to condemn the system because it is "Russian", or to rescue Marxism from "the Russian connection".

On balance, however, I am not inclined to stress the link between Sovietism and the Russian heritage. It is striking that in several countries Communism has assumed almost the same characteristics as define the Soviet system. The French Communists, for example, were for a long time just

ADAM ULAM, *a leading historian of the USSR and Bolshevism, is Gurney Professor of History and Political Science at Harvard University, and Director of its Russian Research Center. Among his books are "Lenin and the Bolsheviks" (1984), "Stalin: The Man and His Era" (1973), and "The Kirov Affair" (1988).*

GEORGE URBAN*'s contributions to* ENCOUNTER *include conversations with Marju Lauristin (March 1990), Hugh Trevor-Roper (December 1989), Milovan Djilas (September–October and November 1988), Vladimir Bukovsky (November 1987, January 1988), Alain Besançon (May and June 1987), Galina Vishnevskaya (December 1986, January 1987), Max M. Kampelman (February 1985), Alexander Zinoviev (April 1984), Jeane Kirkpatrick (November 1983), Eugene V. Rostow (April 1983), and Daniel Bell (February 1983). "Can the Soviet System Survive Reform?", a collection of some of these conversations, was published in 1989 by Pinter Publishers in London and New York.*

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as obedient to Moscow as any Oblast chief under Stalin in the USSR. They followed Soviet propaganda in every detail. No feat of mismanagement was too outrageous for the French Party not to present it as "an economic victory", and no lie too transparent not to embrace it as a triumph of the truth. If *national* environment is the decisive influence on political behaviour, why did the French Party behave as it did?

No, Communism has the notions of autocracy and imperialism deeply embedded in its dogmatic scheme, and wherever Communism triumphs it tends to produce a tyrannical system. The Russian background certainly added to the depredations of Soviet Communism, but it is insufficient to explain it. It is *Communism* that accounts for Soviet despotism, not the history of the Russian people.

—Wouldn't you say that the French Communists obeyed Moscow because it was the world's anti-capitalist power-centre, and thus the ultimate guarantor and paymaster of their existence—and not because they were propelled into submissive behaviour by Communist doctrine? "Polycentrism" notwithstanding, we have little experience of Communist Parties that are not, in one way or another, beholden to Moscow.

ULAM: Moscow as the ultimate anchor did, of course, have a powerful impact on the French Party's behaviour. But the source of French dogmatism was not just the power of Moscow, but the whole body of Communist thought.

The Chinese Party offers another good example. Quite early in their political life, the Chinese Communists diverged from Moscow. Yet, in their model of Communism today, autocratic "Stalinist" features are as firmly established as before they came to power, and later under Mao's stewardship as leader of the ruling Party. I am also convinced that in Germany, had the local Communist rebellions turned into a nation-wide revolution in the early 1920s, as Lenin hoped, that nation would have ended up as a dictatorship very similar to the one Lenin founded and Stalin perfected in Russia. The key to the tyranny of Communism is Communism, not the country in which it is enacted.

—Professor Richard Pipes thinks otherwise. He seems to believe that the Soviet system is a product of Russian history and political culture at least as much as of Bolshevism.[1]

ULAM: Pipes thinks the system is a logical continuation of Czarist autocracy. This is unjust to pre-revolutionary Russia, which was opening up in different directions, including liberal and Westernising ones. I would not deny the impact of the Russian milieu—how could one? But it is greatly exaggerated to say that Bolshevism is specifically and exclusively *Russian*, and to single out Russian political culture for special condemnation.

—But wasn't there fertile ground for collectivism and egalitarianism in the Russian artel *and* mir*—as many late 19th-century social democrats argued? These men and women were in a hurry. They were worried that if they went by the book of Marxist theory, Russian society could not undergo a final Communist revolution before it had gone through "capitalism" and "a bourgeois revolution"—and that would take time. . . . Hence, they said, the existing collectivist* mir *system in the Russian villages should be used as a short-cut to Communism—there was no need to wait for a bourgeois revolution.*

Wouldn't you say that the spirit of egalitarianism in the Russian countryside predisposed Russia to accepting first Leninism and then the full egalitarian rigours of Stalinism? Even under Gorbachov, seven decades on, egalitarianism is a massive stumbling-block to economic reform and private enterprise. The peasants are reluctant to accept the land they are offered under Gorbachov's leasehold arrangements, and many of the newly-formed cooperatives have had to be closed down in response to public anger. Don't these signs rather confirm the view that in some respects "the spirit of Bolshevism" isn't fundamentally at odds with "the spirit of Russia"?

ULAM: No, I don't think they do. It's true that Marx himself, in an incautious moment a few years before his death, said that Russia might (as an exception to the rule) "skip" the stage of bourgeois revolution and capitalism, and advance, through the *mir* system, straight to a Communist revolution. But most historians would disagree with the view that the *mir* background automatically predisposed the Russian Muzhiks to embracing collectivisation.

The best proof that this was not so was the bloody resistance they offered to Stalin's collectivisation campaigns in the 1929-32 period and the passive resistance they have offered ever since—ultimately compelling the régime to start re-examining, under Gorbachov, the whole concept of collectivisation. That the Russian farmer is now hesitating to accept land is not due to his innate reluctance to take charge of his destiny, but to the haunting memory of what happened to his father and grandfather under Stalin's terror—and how "the *NEP*-men" were treated when Stalin decreed that the New Economic Policy had come to an end.

YOU HAVE said that wherever Communism takes hold, a tyrannical system is bound to emerge because of the inherently totalitarian character of Bolshevism. Aren't there other explanations? I would have thought reasons could be found in the history and traditions of any nation to explain why its particular form of Communism (or Fascism, or whatever) is the most wicked.

For example, arguing from certain strands in French history, one could say that the French habit of driving logical argument to its extremes and the glorification of la Révolution *and "the people" make French Communism a most likely candidate for tyranny. In Germany, the combination of the spirit of Hegel, militarism, and the cult of efficiency would argue for an equally nasty form of German Communist despotism. In Romania, we need hardly look beyond the heritage of Vlad the Impaler, the spirit of the Ottoman janis-*

[1] Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Régime* (1974), available in a paper-back edition (Penguin, 1977).

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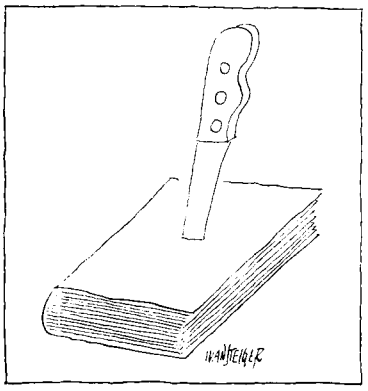
saries, and the Iron Guard to explain why Ceausescu's now toppled dictatorship was the worst of them all.

So, while I am not disputing your point that the trigger to the rise of all these unpleasant forms of government was, or could be, the totalitarian doctrine of Communism, I do believe that every nation has in it the capacity to turn any political idea into a particularly nasty—or an acceptable and civilised—dispensation. There are, it seems to me, strands in every nation's history that can be summoned to support this-or-that form of development—good or bad. But our problem with Bolshevism is that it chose, or perhaps saw itself forced to build on, the most retrograde elements in the Russian heritage.

ULAM: I think we are really both saying the same thing. There *is*, as I've said, a Russian element in the Soviet form of Communism. It stems from a particularly authoritarian conception of socialism in the 19th century, to which were added a very Russian form of xenophobia and Russian nationalism. Leninism inherited all these, and although Lenin thought of himself as a sworn enemy of great-Russian chauvinism, Russian nationalism nevertheless became a determining element of the Soviet system. Under Stalin it came out into the open as a strong Russian chauvinism.

But, with all that, I believe that the totalitarian character of Communist régimes stems from the basic tenets of Communism itself. I do not disagree with you that suitable elements from the national past can be summoned to give it colour and legitimacy, but the basic impulse is the letter and spirit of Communist thought. Communism has to be tyrannical and imperialistic *because* it is Communism.

2. Blaming the Intellectuals



I AM PRESSING YOU *on this point because it has been accepted wisdom in most of our Foreign Ministries (until the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachov) that Soviet expansionism and Soviet foreign policy are best understood as Russian expansionism and Russian foreign policy in a new guise. Nikolai Berdyaev observed in the 1940s: "In 1917 we believed that Communism had swallowed up Russia; today we see that Russia has swallowed up Communism. . . ." It is a view widely held.*

ULAM: But it is mistaken. Foreign Ministry officials are, of course, trained to recognise and deal with political power of the traditional sort. Few of them take the trouble to acquire more than a nodding acquaintance with ideology, which they find alien and impenetrable. Hence their failure to grasp the ideological driving force behind Communist imperialism.

—One reason why our Foreign Ministry officials tend to have an imperfect understanding may have to do with the schizophrenia in Russia itself. The dominant mood in the Soviet state today is nationalistic, whereas Western observers tend to equate the progress of enlightenment in Soviet society with the progress of "Westernisation". Both exist, and if we restrict our view to the rhetoric of "glasnost" and "perestroika", Westernisation in the shape of the Gorbachov reforms appears to be in the ascendant. But underneath that thin guise, Russian culture and the popular ethos still revolve, symbolically speaking, around the traditional triad of Czarism, Orthodoxy, and Peasantry. It is this reality that Western observers have some difficulty in grasping, and when they think they have understood it, they simplify it down to "Fascism . . . pogroms . . . the Black Hundreds".

This is unhelpful enough, but it is even more unhelpful (and much more important) that so many Russian intellectuals seem to be ashamed of their native culture, and share the Western presumption that the worth of Russian civilisation should be judged by its ability to meet certain standards which emerged in France and Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries under entirely different conditions. Isn't this Russian proclivity for self-punishment puzzling and dangerous?

ULAM: It's true enough that the Slavophile and neo-Slavophile elements in Russian behaviour are largely inaccessible to the Western observer. But this is also true of the particular type of nationalism in Poland and Hungary; and because our knowledge is so limited, we may be in for surprises both in the Soviet Union and in Eastern and Central Europe. Slavophilism was, as I have said, accompanied in the 19th century by a strong streak of liberalism. "We are essentially a European nation", the liberals said. "Certainly we have a specifically Russian contribution to make to European civilisation, but our basic European credentials are unassailable. In the past, we were ruined by autocracy and backwardness—but we shall no longer tolerate either the first or the second."

It was this 19th-century liberal tradition that went into Socialism and Communism, and resulted, under Stalin, in its grotesque perversion. Westernising thought ended up in Stalin's boastful chauvinism, expressed at its most extravagant in his famous toast, at the end of the War: "To the Russian Nation." It was the Russian nation, he said, that had stood by the country at the time of its worst trials—meaning that it had stood by Stalin; which is, in my view, not a compliment to the Russian nation. It is for all these reasons that enlightened Russians are now thoroughly alienated from the Communist Party. They see in it a force that combines the tyranny of Leninism with the obscurantism of the Slavophiles.

—Enlightened Russians may do, but haven't the unenlightened masses a different view? I tend to believe that Nina Andreyeva, the Leningrad "re-Staliniser", represents more than a fleeting nostalgia for orderly and more "Russian" times. In an interview with the Hungarian newspaper "Magyar Hirlap" (8 December 1989), she said:

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"I reject every form of private property. . . . In order to force a road open to private property, the 'leading advocates of *perestroika*' demand the creation of a special class of politician in the shape of 'a highly educated parliament'. This, they say, would assemble 'the best brains of the nation'; that is, academicians, economists, lawyers, and other representatives of the intellectual élite. If we consider that there are only 77 such persons among 1,000 Russians but among Jews the ratio is 474, then it is not difficult to figure out whom exactly these people want to foist on us as our leaders. Behind the slogans of 'a highly educated parliament' and 'the best brains of the nation', we can detect a malicious and power-seeking Zionism. . . ."

ULAM: You are saying that this kind of reactionary outlook is more popular than the views of the enlightened intelligentsia who support Gorbachov. Perhaps so. Equating the Jews with ill-gotten wealth and wrongful influence has a long history in Russia, and beyond Russia. No time is better suited for the revival of such anti-Semitic aspersions than a time of acute shortages of food and other consumer goods.

Yet the faceless masses have seldom, perhaps never, played a decisive role in Soviet or Russian affairs. Reform and Revolution came almost always from the top. (Gorbachov's spiritual forebears are Peter the Great and Alexander II.) I am persuaded that the Nina Andreyeva type of "fascistoid Stalinism" is weakly supported by the opinion-making top segments of Soviet society, if indeed it is supported at all. This does not, alas, make it unimportant; but it does limit its operational influence under existing conditions.

The overriding sentiment in the Soviet political class today is a sense of shame: "We are a nation of slaves ruled by scoundrels—we have spent much of our history trying to do something about our backwardness, but with little success. . . ." It is this sentiment that has induced Solzhenitsyn to say that Marxism-Leninism is an international creed imposed on the Russian nation by a minority, under condi-

Of "Chaos . . . Collapse . . . Coercion"

ESTEEMED COMRADES! **Today, in the age of glasnost and democracy, paradoxical as it may sound, what people most lack is the truth—the truth about the real situation in the country, where we are going, who is leading us, and what lies in store for us. Being a prophet is a thankless task, as I have already found. But he who has eyes must see. Let us ask ourselves: Did we really not know, could we not see where the turn of events in Transcaucasia would lead? And today with hindsight we keep lamenting that if radical measures had been adopted just a little sooner, there would have been no bloodshed. Meanwhile, equally dramatic events are taking place in other regions of the country. How many more times must we repeat the well-worn truth that any ailment, including a social ailment, if its course is irreversible, must be stopped as early as possible and by radical methods.**

THE DESTABILISATION *of the situation in the political and economic sphere is increasing every day. And the draft platform we are examining today does not offer any glowing predictions, either. On the contrary, it says that some time will pass and perhaps everything will change. There are many reasons for this, but the most important is that the mechanism of executive power has broken down virtually completely. The governability of the state is rapidly declining. The Ministries are in a state of utter paralysis. The present local Soviets do not yet possess the necessary competence or authoritative powers, either legally or in practice. At the same time a systematic process of distancing the Party from the leadership is taking place, with a reorganisation of the Party apparatus. Perhaps that is right.*

But what has replaced it? Amorphous, essentially faceless structures where everyone is responsible for "political back-up", or in other words, responsible for nothing. As for the role of the primary Party organisations to which we want to hand over authority and powers—that role is proclaimed, and nothing more. Further reductions and shifts in the apparatus will exacerbate the situation.

COMRADES, LOOK AT THE CLOCK. **We still have time, though not very much. A recognition of the need to avert national disaster is promoting us to take non-traditional, unorthodox actions. The Party has no more important goal at present. In this context, let me say this: At this exceptionally difficult, indeed explosive moment for the country, unless we think about how to boost the CPSU's prestige and its mobilising role in our society, unless we set the Communists this task, we will, at the minimun, lead our society into utter chaos—I do not want to use the word "collapse".**

Our Party Central Committee should state clearly and specifically in its platform—and not in the way that it has now been done—that only the CPSU can be the constructive, consolidating basis of our society, the guarantor of the socialist path of development. We have no other acceptable choice, no alternative. Only energetic, constructive activity by the Party, from the Politburo to the primary Party organisation, can stabilise the situation.

One characteristic feature. Today we are discussing a very important, fateful document. But we did not even have the opportunity to study it thoroughly beforehand; basically we were presented with a "fait accompli". . . . Consultations are needed. Everything must be pondered and considered.

BUT THE PARTY *as a whole is also losing the initiative. It is quite obvious that the Central Committee and the Oblast committees are losing ground—are losing, I say, although you could say "have lost". We are faced with the urgent need for renewal in all the leading components, in all the hierarchical structures of the CPSU: complete renewal, radical and immediate. And here I wholly and entirely agree with Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachov's theses.*

Speaking at the last CPSU Central Committee Plenum.

THESE REMARKS—*alarmed, almost desperate—were made on 5 February in Moscow, to the Plenum of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee by one of the leading Party figures, the First Secretary of the Leningrad Oblast Committee.*

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tions of a lost war. There is some truth in that; but its acceptance as a fact of history does not mean approval of the Nina Andreyeva type of neo-Stalinism. And Solzhenitsyn would, of course, be the first to stress that.

—Apropos Solzhenitsyn, isn't there a lack of clarity in the current Soviet intellectual landscape? After the February Revolution of 1905 (and let me just say that in Vladimir Bukovsky's reading there is an analogy between that and the current "pre-revolutionary" upheavals under Gorbachov), the Soviet intelligentsia imposed upon itself a thorough self-examination in order to pinpoint the causes of the Revolution's failure.

In the celebrated volume "Landmarks" ("Vekhi", 1909), a conclusion emerged which deserves a brief mention. Some of the contributors to that symposium—Bulgakov, Berdyaev, Struve, and Frank—expressed the view that the débâcle of 1905 had been due to the Russian intelligentsia's immaturity and its inability to free itself from the bondage of Orthodoxy and Utopian conceptions of Socialism. Even the most Left-wing and outwardly atheistic Russian intelligent, *it was said, was a Christian and a puritan by temperament. His idealism was so concentrated on the universal realisation of the people's happiness that he had neither the time nor the will to concern himself with promoting the good of his neighbour.*

> **"For all its striving for democracy [Sergei Bulgakov observed], the intelligentsia is merely a special kind of aristocratic class arrogantly distinguishing itself from the philistine crowd. Whoever has lived in intelligentsia circles knows well their haughtiness and conceit, their sense of their own infallibility, their scorn for those of other opinions, and the abstract dogmatism into which all learning here is cast. . . ."**

And this is how Peter Struve described the character of the Russian intelligentsia at the turn of the century:

> **"Credulity without a creed, struggle without creativity, fanaticism without enthusiasm, intolerance without humility—in short, here was and is at hand the complete form of religiosity without content."**

Assuming, with Vladimir Bukovsky, that Russia under Gorbachov is undergoing a kind of dress-rehearsal for a much more radical upheaval, does the role of the Soviet intelligentsia today remind you of its forefathers' lack-lustre performance around 1905?

ULAM: It's easy enough to blame the Russian intelligentsia for the failure of Russian reformism. A similar charge was made against the intelligentsia of the 1870s, before the wave of reaction set in that followed the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, and, most notably, after the 1905 revolution.

Bulgakov's remarks do contain some truth, and not merely about the Russian intelligentsia. We recall the infatuation with Marxism which characterised many West European and American intellectuals in the 1930s, and which continued to be a strong force in French intellectual life until the mid-1970s. But it is an over-simplification to blame the failure of the reforms after 1905-1906 on the Russian intelligentsia alone. The Czarist system was simply not strong enough to withstand the forces unleashed by the October Manifesto, *perestroika*'s predecessor; and consequently, confronted with the pressures brought about by World War I, it collapsed—and would still have collapsed even if the intellectuals had acted more responsibly.

It is true that the Soviet scene in 1990 might, in some interpretations, suggest a perversity inherent in the Soviet intelligentsia. Having first greeted Gorbachov's reforms with great warmth, the intellectuals now cry: "Not enough! Not enough!" But, again, the major threat to the reforms comes *not* from the intelligentsia, but from the inherent weaknesses of the system once it has stripped itself of its authoritarian integument.

It is questionable whether anything approaching a democratic system is compatible with the preservation of Soviet federalism. It is even more questionable whether the present conditions of political unrest and disintegration would allow for those sweeping economic reforms which the country needs if it is to be rescued from its deepening crisis.

I said that it is expedient to create a Russian Party organisation—a congress of Russia's Communists is simply essential. . . . We must consolidate our ranks. We must resolve the question of the leadership of the CP of Russia. Harsh necessity leaves us no other choice, and we have no right to drag out this process.

THE DECLINE IN GOVERNABILITY **and the fall in state discipline are acutely affecting the working people's situation. We must carry out monetary reform, introduce economically justified prices, monitor strictly the fulfilment of production plans, and probably introduce a state rationing system for primary industrial goods for the whole of the Soviet Union. Without strict accounting and control of our more than modest resources, they simply will not suffice. Where traditional state measures are powerless, measures of Party and political accountability must be applied.**

And it must be said frankly that political methods cannot be based solely on conviction; they have always contained and always will contain elements of coercion via the state mechanism. And if we adopt such decisions, their implementation must rest entirely on the shoulders of the Party's deputies on the Supreme Soviet.

WE TALK ABOUT *the Party's leading role not just for the sake of the leading role. And we will fight for it, not for the sake of our own ambitions. Only the correctly interpreted objective interest of the working people, as reflected in our ideology, will enable Communists to look people honestly in the eye.*

Today, as we discuss the need for resolute actions, we realise that unless we take the steps that the working person expects of us, he will do it himself. The people are tired of confusion. If we are really a Party that defends the people's interests, we must roll up our sleeves and work, rid ourselves of time-servers and the unscrupulous, and at last cast off our inferiority complex; and only then will people follow us. The time has come to choose. We have reached the limit, and our actions must be appropriate to the critical situation that is taking shape.

B. V. Gidaspov
in PRAVDA *(Moscow)*

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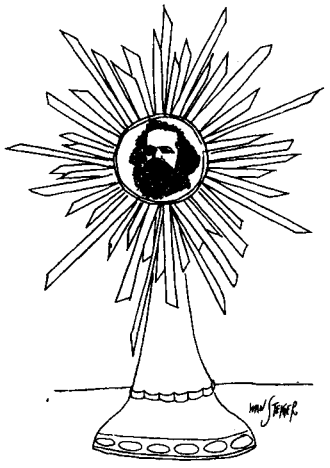
In brief, I am all for taking a critical view of the shortcomings of the intelligentsia, whether in the Soviet Union or elsewhere. But we should have a sense of proportion, and *not* blame everything on "the damned intellectuals"—which in a way is as unfair as blaming the afflictions of the human condition on an ethnic group or an economic class.

3. *Stability & Suffering*



We started by questioning the use of "Soviet" and "Russian" as interchangeable epithets in Sovietological discussion. Another temptation—though of an entirely different kind—is to think of Communist ideology as a religion, and to compare its history with the history of other religions, especially Christianity. Richard Lowenthal, one of the most distinguished elder statesmen in Soviet studies, wrote a book about Communism as a "secular faith", and Sovietological literature abounds in examples which compare the Sino-Soviet split to the dual Papacy, Stalin's show trials to the work of Torquemada during the Spanish Inquisition, and Marxism itself to "Christianity gone awry" (to use the words of Arnold Toynbee). Indeed, Father Oswald von Nell-Breuning of the Society of Jesus, one of the architects of the German policy of industrial co-determination, attempted to find answers to the question whether Marx's idea of public ownership could actually be justified in terms of "primitive Communism" as indicated by certain verses in the Acts of the Apostles.

Is it your view that analogies of this kind might be offensive to Christians or to Communists? Are the psychological and morphological similarities between the two strong enough to justify comparisons, even at the risk of causing offence to one side or the other?

ULAM: Religion and Ideology, in their pure state, are not at all similar. But, in practice, in our own century, the similarities are strong enough to justify, indeed to demand, comparison. "Socialism", as interpreted by Stalin, Mao, Kim Il Sung, and Ceausescu, *was* a kind of religion in that it exacted from the faithful (and not only from them) absolute belief and unquestioning obedience. Marxism itself, of course, demanded no such thing, but "existing socialism" did; and it is, as far as the Soviet Union is concerned, only during the last few years that an attempt is being made to remove its totalitarian-religious incrustations.

I believe, therefore, that general comparisons are not unfair, even though they may hurt the feelings of genuine believers—on both sides. The damage they may do on the Communist side is probably small, as there are only a handful of idealistic Communists left. But I can see that the many people who believe in religion as a great and beneficial spiritual force may find it disturbing to be told that a nominally aetheistic, secular creed, which has become best known to us as a means of acquiring power and practising repression, is a "religion" comparable to, say, Christianity or Judaism.

If you asked a Stalin or a Mao whether he thought the analogy false, I'm sure he would say "Yes"—but he would (if he were sincere) probably add in the same breath that the religious incrustations of Communism were his own doing, for there were only so many ways in which a political programme could be inscribed in the minds of primitive peasants—all of them irrational, and with a symbolism resembling the symbols of religion.

This makes it more difficult for historians not to make the comparison with genuine religions. But even if the religious symbolism of Stalinism and Maoism is discounted and the Utopian doctrine of Communism is examined in its naked state, scholarly comparisons with faiths of an eschatological character are still in order; and have, indeed, been so often made that they fill shelves in our libraries. Whether they please or displease the reader is not central to the concerns of scholarship.

—There is yet another sensitive issue in Sovietological analysis which is associated with the "What is Soviet?—What is Russian?" controversy, but is not identical with it. It has to do with the suspicion—or prejudice—that, left to their natural inclinations, the "dark masses" of Russia would give rise to a state of anarchy alternating with national extremism, if not outright fascism. Some Russian émigré historians (Alexander Yanov, for example) have pointed to the allegedly deep historical roots of this inclination, and called it "the Russian idea". They fear that, with the expiry of Communism, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union would transform itself into the Russian Orthodox Party; and that the resulting messianic Slavophile state would pose as great a threat to the West as the Soviet system did at its most powerful.

I do not share these fears, but could their discussion be offensive to intelligent Russians and—more important—do you as a student of Russian history find that prediction persuasive?

ULAM: I cannot conceive how discussion of the problem could offend. Democracy in Russia is unlikely to make headway unless the Russian people are confronted with the whole panorama of views that exist in the world, including the views historians take of the Russian past and present. This is what, among other things, Gorbachov and his supporters are doing, and I don't think Western historians should do any less. It is condescending to believe that we should give the Russian nation an expurgated or softer view of what we think of them than we give the French or the Germans. It is *that*, in my opinion, that would offend. . . .

I do not share the historical analysis of Yanov and his associates. My own reading of the Russian psyche and of recent Russian and Soviet history persuades me that the emergence of a nationalist/fascist state after the demise of the Soviet system is most unlikely. Why do I take that view? Because Russia has already had a recent experience of fas-

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cism and totalitarianism under Stalin, and is most unlikely to want to undergo another. Stalinism was decked out with internationalist slogans, but it was in all essentials the kind of system whose rise from the ashes Yanov and his friends predict and fear.

However, nations do not make the same mistake twice. If the Russian people were bent on a nationalistic imperial Russian policy, they would be eager to go into Azerbaijan and put down the rebellion. They are not—as we can tell from the Russian mothers' protest in Krasnodar and Stavropol against the call-up of their sons, and the young reservists' own reluctance to fight. Nations bent on empire do not behave like that. Afghanistan has taught the Russian people (and the Red Army) a lasting lesson. They have no stomach for wars which have no conceivable relevance to their own welfare and which point to a further deterioration of Russian living standards—quite apart from the human losses that would inevitably result.

But let us assume that Right-wing nationalism of an extremist kind won out, and Russia came to be ruled, under the official cover of a revived Leninism/Stalinism, by a *Pamyat*-inspired system. What would, in fact, happen? Well, it's difficult to imagine nations such as Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia or Moldavia, which are already on the verge of

"I Went Through Horrors . . ."

ESTEEMED COMRADES! *I would like to begin my speech by quoting from a letter by Comrade Ignatenko, Communist worker at the Kiev Artem production association, which he addressed to Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev after attending a rally.*

> **"I am a Communist of many years' standing. I ventured to speak from the platform of the meeting, trying in a frank and Party-like way to call to reason those taking part in it. But my voice was drowned in hissing and wild abuse. From all sides there could be heard cries and shouts calling for Communists to be destroyed physically. I went through horrors from which I haven't yet been able to recover. What is being done in our disintegrating state? Where are we going to? Isn't it time that you, Mikhail Sergeyevich, and the leadership of the country as a whole thought seriously about the destiny of the socialist state and about the destiny of the honest working people and took the most urgent radical measures before it is too late? God forbid that time should be wasted and all the gains of socialism, on which much labour has been expended, should be lost. The people will never pardon you for that."**

Such opinions, imbued with sincere concern about the fate of socialism in our country, have been heard more and more often in recent times . . . . However, the search for a way out of the crisis has dragged on for too long and the knot of problems is getting tighter and tighter. Meanwhile we continue, slowly but surely, to lose our positions. It is now become a question of the most important thing: of power, of the prospects for the preservation of the ruling Party itself.

COMMUNISTS, **and many non-Party people too, are seriously concerned at the dangerous processes now established in the Party—processes leading to a split.**

Naturally, the Party's leading role cannot be secured by any kind of constitutional or legislative guarantees. In this respect, the CPSU and other political forces must enjoy equal legal rights. On the other hand, the very logic and history of the development of Soviet society have assigned a special place to our Party—special not in terms of a monopoly on power but in terms of historical responsibility for the fate of socialism. We must look truth squarely in the face. There is no other force today capable of consistently upholding the socialist ideals.

THE CRUCIAL QUESTION *today is: Who is going to lead the masses in terms of world outlook, spiritually and ideologically? These questions do not resolve themselves automatically. At present, emotions rather than reason prevail in society. A devaluation of moral values is under way and we are being engulfed by spiritual aridity, crime and total license. This applies above all to young people. Take the trouble to analyse what swamps our children today. And what are we doing? We seek salvation in propagandising religion. Does this mean that we no longer have any use for the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin? Then let us at least recall Aristotle, who said:*

> **"Being dependent on others to some extent and unable to do entirely as you please is very beneficial. After all, permitting everyone to do as he sees fit cannot protect us from the evil which is inherent in every person."**

IT IS BECOMING **increasingly obvious that the Party lacks an integrated ideological platform. Communists are asking an entirely legitimate question: Why do the Party and its Central Committee sometimes assume a defensive stance? Why, in conditions of the pluralism of opinions, do they not have their own precise viewpoint? Why, in view of our tremendous intellectual potential, do we feel theoretically disarmed? Why do we stubbornly fail to notice the attempts of our super-radicals to debunk the leader of the world's first proletarian revolution and to remove him from the pedestal which he allegedly has not deserved, and to declare both Marxism-Leninism and the very idea of socialism unviable? Why have we failed to make prompt political assessments of the events in the Baltic republics, in Fergana, Tbilisi and Transcaucasia? And why do we constantly cede the initiative to others?**

IS IT NOT PLAIN *where the activities of these forces in many parts of the country are leading? Is it possible to adopt a complacent attitude to what was going on yesterday at the rally organised by so-called democratic forces? After all, direct threats against the country's leaders were heard there, calls were made to disband all Party committees including the Central Committee, to eliminate Party organisations and organise a civil disobedience campaign; and other ultimatums were issued. And all this is spreading throughout the country like wildfire, Comrades, exacerbating the specific problems of every region, which are already complex enough . . . .*

A. I Korniyenko
in PRAVDA *(Moscow)*

THESE REMARKS—*troubled, pessimistic almost to the point of despair—were made on 6 February by the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kiev (in the Ukraine).*

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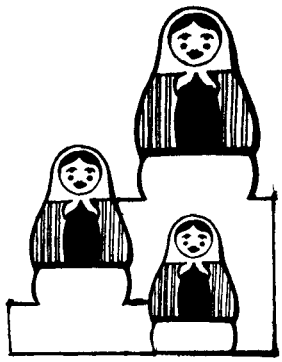
breaking away from a (nominally) "internationalist" Soviet Union, agreeing to stay within a radically nationalist Russian empire. Least of all could the Ukraine be expected to do so. And if we follow that logic far enough, we are left with a purely Slavic or even a purely Russian rump-state—which would represent so startling a turn in history that we must suspend all speculation.

For all these reasons, I don't believe a radically nationalist, neo-Stalinist, Russian restoration is on the cards. I can imagine a democratic but spiritually inspired, perhaps even mildly authoritarian system replacing Marxism-Leninism on the lines Solzhenitsyn may have in mind, but an unholy alliance between *Pamyat* and neo-Stalinism is, in my view, most unlikely to prevail. The Soviet hard-liners would, of course, like nothing better than a return to the old certainties and privileges—but all the evidence I have seen of the state of public opinion points the other way. Central Europe and the Baltic republics are the formative influences in Russia today, not the grotesque ideology of a racially pure, orthodox (or, as some would have it, "de-Christianised") Russia pursuing its statehood under the unforgiving discipline of Leninism.

All Russians Now?



FOR YEARS many of us have tried whenever possible not to fall into the familiar trap of referring to the citizens of the Soviet Union indiscriminately as "Russians".

Not only does this betray fearful ignorance. It is also extremely painful to all those Georgians, Estonians, Ukrainians, Armenians and others who have good reason to feel infinitely aggrieved at being confused with the power which has forcibly taken over their countries. But now, just as the outside world is generally becoming aware of just how important this distinction is, along comes Canon Brian Brindley saying that he is getting rather tired of seeing this "ugly and foolish word Soviet" used to describe citizens of the Soviet Union, and that he would much rather that in general we used the word "Russians".

He even goes so far as to say that using the word "Russian" to include Latvians, Kirghiz, Uzbeks and so forth is just like the way we use the word "American".

IN FACT IT WOULD BE *hard to miss the point about the Soviet Union more completely. If Canon Brindley really wants a parallel he should venture into a bar in Donegal or County Mayo and try to persuade the natives of those parts that it would be much more sensible if in future they were all to call themselves "Englishmen".*

As he crawled out of the nearest bog, squeezing the Guinness out of his hair, he might realise that "Soviet" is not such a bad term for describing citizens of the Soviet Union after all.

"Peter Simple II"
(Christopher Booker)
in THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

—Looking at the decline of the Soviet Empire from the Western point of view, there is an opinion abroad, shared by many of our leaders, that a rapid and uncontrolled disintegration might pose so great a threat to world stability that our dislike of the Soviet system should now be tempered by our even greater dislike of chaos. The consequences of the colonial wars that would follow the collapse of Soviet power can (it is said) already be felt in the wake of Azerbaijan. Lord Dacre (Hugh Trevor-Roper), for example, takes the view that empires mean a certain world security and that we ought to support them, as long as they are supportable, for want of a better alternative.[2] *Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, has expressed the opinion (sharing a platform with Gorbachov and Shevardnadze) that both NATO and the Warsaw Pact should stay in place. These are indirect ways of saying that we ought not to hasten the demise of Soviet power, for the Warsaw Pact has never been a pact in the accepted sense of the term, but a naked expression of Soviet hegemony.*

Do you support the "Rather the Soviet system than Anarchy" school of thinking?

ULAM: No, I don't; and I don't believe these are the alternatives. I don't take the opposite view either. I do not hold to *fiat justitia, pereat mundus* (let there be justice, though the world perish), which tends to be the view taken by libertarian American idealists. My hope is that change in the Soviet Union will be gradual and non-violent. But this caution does not lessen my enthusiasm for radical change.

I'm not one of those who believed in the 1960s and '70s that the USSR was a great military threat to Western Europe. In retrospect it is even clearer now than it was twenty years ago that the Soviets had no intention of invading us, and very probably didn't have the staying power to do so. Yet I would insist that the USSR before Gorbachov's accession was a source of permanent world instability because of the oppressive and expansionist nature of the system. The excommunication of Tito, the suppression of the 1953 Berlin uprising, the troubles in Poznan and Warsaw in 1956, the Hungarian Revolution, the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 were tremendous threats to the stability of Europe. Also, the Soviet régime was repeatedly finding itself under domestic pressures. There was a great temptation to defuse these by the traditional method of canalising the people's pent-up emotions into external adventures. In 1973 (to take one example), escalation of the crisis in the Middle East was avoided by the thinnest of margins.

In sum: there are dangers attending the fall of any great empire, but on balance I incline to think that disintegration of the iniquitous Soviet system is infinitely less destabilising than its continuing existence would be.

—For 70-odd years we have been working and praying for the cloud of Soviet Communism to lift from our affairs without cataclysmic upheavals. Now that it is happening, isn't it a little disingenuous of our leaders suddenly to discover the dangers of the fall of the Soviet Empire and of German unification? I would have thought this might be a time for some quiet rejoicing.

[2] See, in ENCOUNTER, December 1989, Hugh Trevor-Roper and George Urban, "Aftermaths of Empire".

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ULAM: I agree. Liberal democracies have got so used to looking for the down-side of things that they can't recognise a victory when they see one. One has to be a Russian or a Czech to appreciate the full significance of what is happening.

—In the West, we have been spared the imposition of a totalitarian Utopia which has haunted the world for the best part of two centuries; but we have managed to keep our heads above water only because we were standing on the shoulders of submerged Russians, Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians. If human affairs were governed by a sense of justice and men's eyes could be lifted above interest rates and the monthly mortgage repayment, wouldn't we owe these guinea-pigs of history some restitution, in the spiritual sense of the word, if in no other?

ULAM: In principle—yes. And that is what many Russians, including Solzhenitsyn, feel very strongly. There is an old Russian idea (shared in the 19th century by many Poles) that Slavic suffering does penance for the whole of Christendom. But history has no "law of communicating vessels"; the water-levels do not adjust, and are probably not adjustable. The inequity of history is a hard and tragic truth for ordinary mortals to assimilate.

4. *Two Cheers*

LET'S ASSUME *for a moment that the growing instability of the Soviet Empire* **is** *a danger to world stability. Was there some point in post-War history when the Soviets could have stabilised their holdings and we might have accepted that stabilisation as being of mutual advantage?*

ULAM: There were several such points. A decade or two ago, when internal pressures within the USSR were still dormant, the Soviet leadership could have designed a long-range plan for the "Finlandisation" of most of East and Central Europe, on the argument that the cyclical outbreaks of unrest and rebellion would sooner or later become an uncontainable disease. It should have done so at the time of the Polish upheavals, in 1980-81, at the latest, but it missed that opportunity. Now it is too late. Governing élites seldom have the foresight to anticipate the sort of troubles that do not immediately impinge upon their calculations and interests.

—But doesn't the evaporation of the Communist Parties, and the introduction of the multi-party system and the market economy, in fact mean a belated "Finlandisation"? Moscow's former satellites seem to remain tied to the USSR in Defence terms, as Finland is, but they are heading for full domestic sovereignty. . . .

ULAM: Czechoslovakia and Hungary have asked for the withdrawal of Soviet troops, and Moscow has agreed. This does not formally, or automatically, mean their, or Poland's, departure from the Warsaw Pact; but the decision to ask for a Soviet evacuation does in practical terms come pretty close to it. In any case, with the defection of the whole of Central and Eastern Europe from the political *glacis* of the USSR, the Warsaw Pact has in effect fallen apart.

Some of our political leaders who speak about the need to keep NATO and the Warsaw Pact in balance produce two arguments. First, that it is important to keep NATO in good working order in preparation for a rainy day, because you can never tell how the turmoil in the USSR might end. We can all agree that this is rational. The second argument, however, is not rational. It says that the Warsaw Pact also has to stay in place, in order to reassure Gorbachov's critics that the crumbling of the outer Empire will not jeopardise the inner Empire's long-term Security interests. This is supposed to be part of the help we are giving Gorbachov.

But there is a fly in the ointment. If the nations of Central and Eastern Europe do not want to be members of the Warsaw Pact—and it is clear that they do not—on what moral or pragmatic grounds can we in the West tell them that they should remain members, seeing that we have been busy telling them for the last 35 years that the Warsaw Pact was merely an expression of naked Soviet hegemony and that their enforced membership was an insult to their dignity and national self-determination?

Principle VIII of the Helsinki Final Act is about self-determination. We cannot possibly want to keep the Warsaw Pact alive *and* use the Helsinki Agreement as the spine of a new European settlement.

In many ways, therefore, we are past the stage of "Finlandisation" in East and Central Europe. Also, any "Finlandisation" Moscow may have been planning did not, in my opinion, foresee the defection of East Germany. Yet that too is happening. What is more, Moscow is accepting all these developments.

—Aren't our critics in the East, then, justified in saying that no sooner had Moscow renounced "the Brezhnev Doctrine" than the West decided to sustain it?

ULAM: That charge could legitimately be made—but nothing we do will sustain the Warsaw Pact. It is in a state of collapse, and so is the Soviet will to keep it going. The whole post-War European settlement will have to be rethought.

"HELPING *Gorbachov" puts me on my guard for yet another reason. Suppose we managed to pull the Soviet economy out of the ditch and upgraded the existing model of socialism into one efficient enough to sustain a humane welfare-socialism with a low military budget and an inward-looking foreign policy. Wouldn't that encourage the derailed train of socialism to be shunted back on to the main lines again, on the argument that socialism has, after all, had the strength and courage to overcome its afflictions and return to its pristine inspiration? Achille Occhetto (leader of the Italian Communist Party),*

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Tony Benn (of the British Labour Party) and others have already argued in favour of this, and have been applauded by "Pravda" (25 January 1990) for having done so.

Is it in our interest—is it in the human interest?—that so flawed a conception of Man and Society should have another lease of life?

ULAM: I am a liberal with conservative leanings. I do not believe with Hayek and Friedman that a *laissez-faire* capitalist market economy is the only road to the creation of wealth, and through that to a more prosperous and caring society. Nor do I believe that there are *no* circumstances under which a socialist economy could work. Yet I am persuaded that the Soviet type of socialism as an idea and an economic blueprint is now totally discredited; internationally speaking, it has lost the game. I do not believe that the stain of the Soviet experiment, and of Stalinism in particular, can be removed from the fabric of socialism.

There may be regions in the world—Latin America, for example—where for one reason or another the appeal of some variants of Marxism will survive for a while. But socialism as the great Utopian adventure of our time is stone dead; and it died from the Soviet-Russian connection.

—You and I have spent a large part of our lives studying and criticising the Soviet system. Now the system is facing an

On "Getting into the Saddle of a Bolting Horse"

Cambridge, Mass.

ONLY A little while ago Mikhail Gorbachev and his followers asserted heatedly that it was undesirable or at least greatly premature for the Communist Party to abdicate its role as the leading force in the state and society—to give up its monopoly of power. Now, a few months later and on Gorbachev's initiative, the Central Committee has agreed to do so. Now the road is open for other parties to spring into existence and to challenge the Communists' faltering grip on political and social controls.

The event in itself may appear anti-climactic. For five years we have witnessed a steady erosion of the authoritarian features of the régime. Much of that erosion has come as a consequence, whether intended or not, of perestroika, the régime's efforts at self-reform. But many aspects of the current political scene are the result of spontaneous forces generated by a society no longer paralyzed by fear, as in Stalin's time, or kept on a short leash, as by his successors. It is a society no longer awed by its rulers.

SO IT IS NOT ONLY *authoritarianism that has been eroded—the very authority of the government and of the system has been challenged. The unity of the Soviet state is threatened by the centrifugal forces released by glasnost.*

Within the Party there has been increasing resentment of Gorbachev's policies. But even his most conservative opponents have not tried to remove him, rightly fearful that with him gone, the present social disarray and unrest might reach bursting point. The General Secretary has thus been able to prevail not so much because of his political strength but because of the current weakness of the Soviet system. But how long can this situation continue?

WHAT HAS BEEN **happening in Eastern Europe can hardly serve as a model for the Soviet Union. The Communist régimes in Poland, Hungary and elsewhere in Eastern Europe had survived only because of the assumption that an attempt to overthrow or basically change them would bring Soviet military intervention. When that assumption collapsed, so did those régimes. But in Russia, communism was not imposed by foreigners. For a long time it drew its strength (and to some extent still does) from Russian nationalism, rather than opposing it.**

The situation might be likened to that of a man racing alongside a bolting horse. How can Gorbachev get into the saddle? His original concept of perestroika as establishing a new balance between the State organs and those of the Party is being rendered increasingly obsolete through the loss of authority by both. He must seek new solutions.

ONE WOULD BE *to shift the centre of gravity of the Soviet system away from the Party and to the State institutions. The latter (at least their legislative segment) would reflect the newly proclaimed political pluralism. But conceivably the tendency toward further erosion of social discipline could be arrested if the role of the President . . . were enhanced, making him a supraparty arbiter—if not a dictator, then a kind of Soviet de Gaulle.*

EVEN WITH SUCH POWERS **it would be difficult for the government to counter the trend towards polarization of political life on the Ethnic-National Separatist issue and in the clash between conservatives and proponents of fuller liberalization. What liberalization has been carried out has brought to the surface forces that might soon congeal into parties and which are thoroughly anti-democratic in their attitudes. For instance, both inside and outside the Party are groupings organized in the name of Russian nationalism, some with a distinctly neo-Stalinist coloration.**

Would the new perestroika order, more specifically Mr Gorbachev as President, be able to tame the forces of reaction, stop the slide toward dissolution of the Union and make the people understand the need for sacrifices inherent in any thoroughgoing scheme of economic reform?

TO LIST *these conditions is to realise the vastness of the task facing the Soviet leadership and the enormity of the problem of transforming the most enduringly authoritarian and repressive system in modern times into one that is set firmly on the path to democracy and modernism.*

But hard as the first steps on that path are, the alternatives to it are too frightening to contemplate. Any attempt to set the clock back might plunge the country into anarchy and unleash civil wars of which the present ethnic clashes would have been but feeble rehearsals.

Adam B. Ulam
in the WASHINGTON POST

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appalling crisis, and for the very reasons we said that it would occur. We don't expect a pat on the back; has history ever been kind to men who were right before their time? Yet I am a little astonished by the almost deafening silence of our political Establishments and our colleagues in scholarship. Apart from lone voices in the "Washington Times" and the "Wall Street Journal", few have acknowledged publicly that Robert Conquest, Leonard Schapiro, Hugh Seton-Watson, Adam Ulam, Melvin J. Lasky, and Alain Besançon (for example) have been right all the time, or that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty have just won a 35-years' war against great odds, both in the US and in their target area.

ULAM: When you think of all our statesmen and stateswomen who fraternised with and fawned upon people like Ceausescu, Kadar, Gomulka, Gierek, Honecker, Brezhnev, and Andropov—perhaps we should not be too surprised. In scholarship, too, there is so much egg on so many faces that one had better not go into the details.

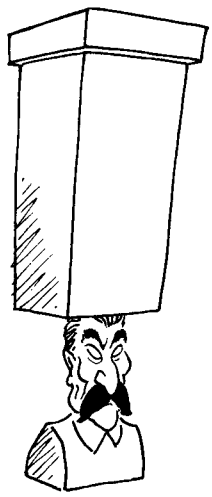
I SHOULD *imagine that your biography of Stalin, which you wrote almost twenty years ago, must give you a good deal of satisfaction. It has been confirmed in almost every detail by the revelations that come our way day after day from the Soviet Union. Modesty probably prevents you from celebrating (though in the "hard" sciences less accurate analyses and smaller discoveries have earned their makers many a Nobel Prize). But do you feel the kind of joy that made Leonard Bernstein mount two great performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on each side of the fallen Wall of Berlin (and change the choral section's opening word from* Freude *to* Freiheit*)?*

ULAM: Of course, I am gratified that I have not committed too many gross errors; but my joy is restrained—and for two reasons. One is the natural anti-climax that follows every victory: the truth has ultimately triumphed, but at what price? Who can bring back the men and women who were sacrificed by the millions to a savage utopia? Who can heal the wounds, or cut across the tragic spiral of revenge and counter-revenge?

The second reason for my restraint is our apparent inability to learn from what has happened. The demise of Soviet Communism has been the defeat of a great evil. It should have given rise in our own society to a form of thanksgiving, to a great spiritual renewal, seeing how narrowly we escaped. But that is patently not happening.

In the USA we have a society that is much less desirable to live in than American society was 25 years ago during what we should perhaps label "the pre-Beatles phase of Western civilisation". We have drug-taking and crime on a vast scale; moral licence; contempt for learning and for ideals of excellence; a loss of respect for anything of permanent beauty and good report; a levelling down of manners and standards of decency in daily commerce with fellow men and women. I give two cheers for the disintegration of Communism—but withhold the third.

5. *End of the Lesson?*



ISN'T IT INTERESTING, *though—and rather depressing—that some of those very unpleasant features of Western society which you have listed are being greeted in the Soviet domains and in Eastern and Central Europe as symbols of moral renewal, emancipation, and liberation? In Mongolia, for example, a rock 'n' roll song (by the Honk Band) which criticises bureaucracy in Mongolian life is becoming the unofficial anthem of the protest movement. In Russia, "the Age of Rock" is said to have begun with student opposition to the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. Throughout the Communist and formerly Communist territories such phenomena—rock music, drugs, lack of work-discipline, sexual promiscuity—are celebrated as consecrated methods of defeating the homogenising Soviet system, in much the same way as our own student rebels of the 1968 generation felt that they were rising against a de-personalising, materialistic, uninspired, capitalist society.*

ULAM: The Soviet dissidents' embrace of our junk-culture is sad but understandable. In Soviet and East European eyes, any relief from a drab, uniform reality is pregnant with revolutionary meaning—especially if it can be said to come from Paris or New York. Whether it is based on nonsense and can lead to (as it has already led to) the most personally and socially undesirable consequences is a realisation that comes much later, if it comes at all. It is repellent enough to listen to the deafening music-making of a drug-addicted American "under-class"; but I find it almost unbearable to watch their Russian and Czech imitators. We can only pray and hope that when liberation is accomplished, these countries may be liberated from junk-culture too.

—What about the satisfaction you must feel on account of your scholarly books and the applause you have won in what used to be hostile territory?

ULAM: I do have a sense of satisfaction, but it is incomplete. We have had confirmed what we already knew from our laborious researches; some details have been added but these do not change our picture. However, my primary interest in Stalin was not just to find out what he did, but to discover what assumptions prompted him to do those ghastly things. "What explains Stalin?" was the question that exercised me; and I still haven't got reliable answers.

Take one of the basic problems of Stalin research. Here is a man who slaughtered millions. Did he really believe that, in one way or another, they were guilty of something which he genuinely thought was criminal? (After all, we know that 99.9% of those executed were completely innocent of harbouring even vaguely anti-régime sentiments.) Or did Stalin think of the killing of millions simply as an effi-

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cient method of ruling the country—a way in which a man running Russia *has* to exercise power?

These are fundamental questions; but nothing written or done in the Soviet Union in recent years has really helped to clarify them. Personally, I lean to the second supposition, but I have no solid evidence to prove it.

—Aren't we, despite the enormous literature on the subject, still groping for an explanation of the psychological roots of the whole period of Stalinist terror? I notice that Alexander Yakovlev, speaking as Head of the Politburo Commission charged with the "rehabilitation" of the victims of the Stalin era, said in "Moscow News" (7 January 1990) that his researches into the period left him baffled. He was appalled, he said, not only by the thoroughness of the Terror, but by the eager cooperation of so many people. Stalin's most recent biographer, General Dmitri Volkogonov, on the other hand, holds that, in the same way as some people are born without sight or hearing, Stalin simply lacked a moral faculty . . . .

ULAM: I'm quite willing to grant that Stalin was amoral, but even monsters like Hitler and Stalin have elements in their mental make-up which can help us to understand the way they saw things. As historians, we are interested not just in condemning Stalin—which is easy; everybody's doing it now—but in identifying the intellectual and psychological roots of Stalin's thinking. That is a challenging task in its own right, but it is even more important as a guide to future policy and an early warning to public opinion—"This is what you ought to watch out for. . . ."

Morality apart, if Stalin's guide to action was simply the practicality of terror—i.e., "This is the best and only possible way to govern unruly Russians"—we are still left with a question. At what point did Stalin realise that terror was becoming counter-productive? At what point did he say to himself: "If I have another 50,000 miners shot, there won't be any coal production. . . . If I have another 200 military officers executed, the Red Army will cease to be an instrument of Soviet Power . . . ." And so on. Was he rational in the use of terror? And if he was, what were his parameters?

—Have any of the revelations under glasnost weakened or qualified your work on Stalin?

ULAM: Details have emerged that appear to contest some of my inferences, but they don't affect my conclusions. The mystery about the Kirov affair continues.[3] My friend Robert Conquest has been after me for saying that we still have no "smoking gun" evidence, even though Soviet statements now clearly imply that Stalin was the instigator of Kirov's assassination. In 1956, Khrushchev had hinted as much. However, hard evidence has yet to be brought to light.

Trotsky's violent death in Mexico, on the other hand, is no longer shrouded in mystery. Soviet sources have joined the rest of us in ascribing Trotsky's murder to Stalin. My own work on the subject has also been quoted . . . .

[3] Two years ago, Adam Ulam published a fictitious reconstruction of Sergei Kirov's murder, under the title *The Kirov Affair* (Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich, 1988).

—Isn't this yet another piece of evidence to show that Alexander Zinoviev is misguided in saying that no Western observer can understand the workings of the Soviet system?

ULAM: That's nonsense, of course. Soviet historians and publicists daily acknowledge their debt to Western scholarship, on the subject of Stalinism and on many other topics which were undiscussible in the USSR for the greater part of Soviet history. When "de-Leninisation" comes into full swing, the work Western scholars have done on Lenin should have an equally profound impact.

—If and when the myth of Lenin is also destroyed, will that not remove what remains of the glue holding the Party and the Union together? I notice, however, that one of the new "parties" within the CPSU—the Democratic Platform—assumes the opposite. It claims that Leninism is so discredited that the CPSU will disintegrate if it **does** *hold on to Leninism. Its best known leader, Yuri Afanasyev, has stated:*

> **"The existing party has no future because it is a Leninist Party . . . . We must reject all features of a party which traces its origins back to Lenin."**

ULAM: "De-Leninisation" would face the leadership with a tremendous psychological problem. If you give up the creed and symbolism of Lenin, what remains? Nothing. This was fully recognised by M. F. Nenashev, Chairman of Soviet Radio and Television, when he said at the Central Committee's ideological discussion on 26 January 1990: "We are at the crucial point where Vladimir Ilych Lenin is the last frontier."

If Lenin is dropped too, the Empire will either fall apart or will have to be held together by brute force. Coercion could happen under some form of neo-Stalinism or under a militant Russian nationalism. Whichever it was, it would not be a pretty or peaceful affair. Gorbachov and his friends have every incentive not to allow the so far largely academic criticisms of Lenin to engulf the country. But whether they can completely stop this from happening is another matter. In a country in which Soviet artillery fire had to be used to sink the Soviet tankers which were blockading the Soviet port of Baku, anything can happen.

WITH THE expiry of Marxism-Leninism as an ideological blue-print, a great void has been created. What sort of cause will all those people now embrace who feel almost genetically deprived without an overall ideological commitment but can no longer find satisfaction under Communism? Doesn't the spectacle of so many fanatical minds seeking a new outlet rather frighten you?

ULAM: The loosening of spiritual and intellectual loyalties, whether they take the form of decline of religions or of ideologies, is always followed by a time of acute danger. The old compasses have lost their magnetic north, and there is nothing yet to take its place. A completely mature man might argue that the mark of ripeness is precisely the ability to do without such compasses. But we must be realistic, and

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acknowledge that the majority of human beings require a commitment to church, nation, or ideology, or some combination of these.

Predictions are difficult. In Western Europe and the USA, the decline of Christianity as a universally accepted spiritual undercurrent of our life has been accompanied first by worship of the demi-gods Stalin and Hitler, and then by sectarian cults borrowed from the Orient and from psychology. In 1968, it was clear enough that the loose energies of the young were seeking an outlet which they could not identify. They were long on frustration but short on any constructive purpose. In France, "imagination" was said to be enough to qualify as "power"; and in Germany some of the young rebels thought it was "better to burn a store than to run one". I remember a French journalist exclaiming when he saw the students march on the Champs Elysée: "They haven't had a war for 25 years." And that was probably a good part of the explanation.

More recently we have had the women's movement, the sexual revolution, and the drastic reform of the Catholic Church; but these moves towards emancipation are unlikely to be proper substitutes for the radical aspirations which an all-embracing Communism satisfied but can satisfy no longer. I have no patent remedy. I fear what you fear.

—In Poland, some hopeful Bishops talk about the birth of a Roman Catholic belt stretching from Lithuania in the Baltic to Croatia on the Adriatic—it would, they think, constitute a wholesome spiritual influence between an apostate West and an unpredictable post-Communist East.

ULAM: I really cannot see Catholicism assuming a wide political role. In Poland it acquired great power and influence under Communism, but it is already slowly retreating under the impact of the practical requirements of a secular democratic society. The same is bound to happen elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The Church thrives under oppression more than it does in a free and permissive society. The creeping de-Christianisation of Britain is one good example, even though Britain has an established Church, and the Monarch is officially "Defender of the Faith".

—That leaves us with the unsavoury possibility of Nationalism coming back to occupy the vacant pedestals . . . .

ULAM: That is a possibility. Nothing is *impossible* in history. Who would have thought, more than 300 years after the Ottoman Turks had been chased back from the outskirts of Vienna, that there would be an Islamic revival, and that Muslim fanaticism would grip Iran, much of North Africa, and now the Turkic world?

But apocalyptic parallels have to be treated with caution. The disintegration of the Soviet Empire will not, in my opinion, take us back to 1910. A reunited Germany will not be anything like the Kaiser's Germany, much less the Third Reich. The USA will not withdraw from the affairs of Europe as it did in 1919. And European unification will not be sunk by a new Rapallo. I am optimistic enough to believe that Hegel was wrong when he concluded that "We learn from history that we do not learn from history."

—But wouldn't you agree that (as a Hungarian quip has it) "A pessimist is simply an informed optimist"? And aren't you an eminently informed person?

ULAM: I'm afraid the Hungarian joke is slightly off target for once. We do learn from history, though we do not always learn enough or in time. I am optimistic enough to believe that the fratricidal "Thirty Years War" that wrecked our civilisation between 1914 and 1945 has been no end of a lesson—of which the unification of Europe is our best evidence. The past has to be both respected and, often, rejected.

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Seance on a Wet Afternoon

That lost dingy kingdom,
Un-Babel of the echoes, spotted mirrors,
in the hall the forms of lovers
—coat shadows at the corner of the eye.

"Is the door shut?"
Now, look up and search
for silver trumpet, tambourine returns
—unanswered by the crowded flowers on the wall;

the full sky responding only
with its imitative tears,
the known, unechoed music of the rain
—the deft, sad drummer on the window pane.

William Palmer

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EAST & WEST

Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia

Baltic Notebook

By ANATOL LIEVEN

"To be hated hurts no one; it is contempt that drags men down."

GOETHE

THREE DAYS have passed since the Lithuanian Declaration of Independence on 11 March. The earth failed to move, and General of the Army Ivan Danielevich Chernyakhovsky is still on top of and beneath his plinth. Chernyakhovsky commanded the Third Byelorussian Front which recaptured Vilnius in July 1944 and was later killed in East Prussia. He was also, I am informed, the last officer of Jewish extraction to hold top command in the Soviet Armed Forces.

The General's statue stands in a square in central Vilnius on the road which used to be called Gedymin Avenue (after the 14th-century prince, Lithuania's most famous ruler), then became Lenin Avenue, and now is Gedymin Avenue once again. It presents a difficult problem—or, perhaps, presented, for by the time this piece appears a solution may have been found to its continued existence. Most Lithuanians have always disliked it as a symbol of foreign empire, and now the moment seems to have come when it can be removed. The problem is that the General is buried underneath his statue; and digging him up would be, if possible, an even worse offence to Moscow and to Lithuania's local Russians than knocking down the statue of Lenin which stands just down the road. "My personal reaction to such a step would be negative", a (still extant) Soviet General told me stonily.

ANATOL LIEVEN *was until recently the correspondent in Islamabad for the "The Times" (London), covering events in Afghanistan and contributing an article on "The Kingdom of Kabul" to the December 1989* ENCOUNTER. *Since his recovery in England from spinal injuries received in northern Afghanistan, he has written for "The Times" on the revolutions in Czechoslovakia and Romania, and is now reporting from the Baltic states as a correspondent for "The Times" and "The Economist".*

I met this officer on "Soviet Armed Forces Day". The ceremonies took place at General Chernyakhovsky's monument and were rather a sad affair, attended mainly by elderly veterans of "the Great Patriotic War". Apart from the surviving leadership of the pro-Moscow Communist Party in Lithuania, no Lithuanians appeared to be present. Russian youths also stayed away, although they turned out in their thousands a few weeks later to oppose Lithuania's Independence, but that demonstration seemed to stem mainly from a mixture of economic fear and national chauvinism. Even among the so-called "ruling race", there are few signs of attachment to the Soviet Union and its imperial symbols, and this is hardly surprising since the Russians here are from the poorer sections of the working class and, by and large, worse housed, clothed, and fed than their unwilling hosts.

The failure of the younger elements of the Russian population to turn out that day probably has some significance for their attitude to the Lithuanian independence movement, Sajudis. After all, Soviet youth also has its complaints about the Soviet system.

A rather funny side of what I took to be disenchantment with Soviet tradition was provided by the officers at this ceremony. Soviet uniforms are modelled on those of the Russian Empire, and the impression of *ancien régime* is accentuated by the fact that so many of the Generals are extremely ancient. After the ceremony, two of them bowed like figures from *War and Peace*, and kissed the hand of my Lithuanian companion. This is not something which would have been expected of the Bolshevik leaders of the Red Army, rather of the armies in which my ancestors fought. However, Russian nationalists too feel that their traditions have been squashed and debased by the Communists (although unfortunately this is unlikely, in the case of the Generals, to make them less enthusiastic about the Russian Empire), and there is certainly a deep weariness and disgust, especially among "conservative" Russians, with what Communism has done. They too are looking for new symbols, new rules of behaviour.

CHERNYAKHOVSKY'S widow has asked that moving him be delayed until after her own death; and that would be an honourable way out of the embarrassment. The fact that the statue still stands is a remarkable testimony to the Lithuanians' general coolness and discipline. Their leaders have asked the people not to provoke Moscow unnecessarily—yet in the Transcaucasus, statues are falling like skittles.

It may be, however, that the failure—so far—of the Lithuanians to knock down Lenin and Chernyakhovsky, and to hold huge demonstrations to celebrate the decision to go it alone, also reflects a sobering of the national mood. Lithuanians may have voted for the Sajudis in the election out of an almost universal psychological commitment to the principle of independence, and of accumulated loathing for the Communist Party. Most, however, do not seem to have reckoned on such rapid change. Given the speed of events, by the time this piece is published, it may be apparent just how far their various fears were justified.

The monument to Chernyakhovsky is no great work of

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art, but at least it looks better in reality than in the description in my 1981 Soviet guidebook:

> "His intelligent, resolute face is anxious and strained as he directs the battle. He is standing still and only his clenched left fist displays his inner tension. . . ."

I keep this work on my desk in Vilnius as the most immediate and convenient antidote whenever the simple—and sometimes simple-minded—nationalism of many Lithuanians begins to worry me unduly. It reminds me of everything that Soviet subjects—and especially the intelligentsia—had to bear in the decade before Gorbachov came to power.

The guidebook reminds me too that, for all their ambiguities as forces for progress and their selective attitude to national history, the Baltic National Movements do in a real sense represent the victory of truth. For the offences against truth in this Soviet guide are innumerable. For example, the inhabitants of Vilnius at the time of the German invasion in 1941, when hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians and Poles had just been deported from the area to Siberia and death, are described as "leading a stimulating and constructive life". Of greater contemporary significance—because it gives some of the ethnic conflicts now plaguing the Soviet Union an element of tragic nemesis—is the guidebook's neglect of other cultures (apart from the Russians', of course). Of the two peoples who dominated Vilnius from the Renaissance to the 1940s, the Poles at least receive a mention, although it would be quite impossible to understand the importance of Vilnius (or Vilno) for Polish culture from this or any other Soviet work.

Vilna (the third alternative spelling) was also for several centuries perhaps the most important Jewish city in the world, and in 1939 Jews made up around one third of its total population. Today, they are a mere 5,000, and shrinking fast through emigration to Israel. A bare handful attend the only surviving synagogue. Most of the present Jewish community are Russian speakers from other parts of the USSR. As I discovered when I shared a railway carriage with a Jewish ensemble travelling from Vilnius to Riga, they try to keep alive the Yiddish tradition with plays and songs, but given the speed with which they themselves are vanishing, the Yiddish language—perhaps the richest intellectual sub-soil the world has ever known—seems on the point of extinction in this region.

In my guidebook, the existence of the Jewish community of Vilna is never mentioned. The inscriptions and monuments of Paneriai (Ponary), where the remains of its last generations lie in huge pits in the forest, record the deaths of "100,000 Soviet citizens" at the hands of the Nazis—in other words, tens of thousands of people who in most cases were not "Soviet" and in no case were "citizens". The intention of the approach shown in the guidebook, and in so many other Soviet works on the histories of the various republics of the USSR, seems to have been to flatter every national majority (in this case, the Lithuanians) by glorifying their history over that of their immediate neighbours, while placing each one alone before the throne of a benevolent Muscovy. The ignorance, even of many educated people, in the Baltic Republics about the other Baltic peoples is truly amazing, while the Byelorussians might as well be "heathen Chinese". Given an Imperial strategy of accentuating provincialism, the noble dream of "Soviet patriotism" probably never stood much of a chance. Of course, Lithuanian chauvinist attitudes—above all, to Poles and Jews—long predated Soviet rule, but it is very clear that this rule did not assist matters.

The Polish community in Lithuania seems prepared to go along with independence; they will not demand their own autonomous region, and in many ways this is better than the Lithuanians deserve. Their blindness—no worse, of course, than that of any other nation—to the fact that, for example, Vilnius has different identities for different people was shown by a speech made by the new President, Dr Vytautas Landsbergis, before his election. He stressed the support of Sajudis for "minority rights", but when he was asked about the possibility of founding a Polish University in Vilnius—or rather, of refounding the University which stood in Vilno for so many centuries—he replied, "There is no need for this, as they can always go to Poland to study". It did not seem to occur to him what a magnificent gesture to the Poles such a refoundation would be. On the other hand, of course, one must remember that the Poles when ruling in Vilnius were, to put it mildly, no more generous in their attitude to the Lithuanians.

With the Jews (including their strange sub-sect the Karaites), the Polish aristocracy and intelligentsia, and the traditions of the Lithuanian peasantry all vanished, there is little to recall Vilno's image in Polish culture as a rather exotic frontier city. But it is certainly exotic in terms of the Soviet Union. A Western correspondent from Moscow, visiting Vilnius for the first time and sitting in a café (a rare Soviet institution), declared, "This doesn't feel like the Soviet Union at all". Which most of the time it doesn't. The standard of living is much higher, and the architecture displays very clearly its Catholic and Western roots. Here the image of the frontier is apparent. For Vilno was, to a great extent, developed as a bastion against the Orthodox to the east. Echoing G.K. Chesterton, Czeslaw Milosz, one of its greatest children, describes it as "narrow cobblestone streets and an orgy of baroque: almost like a Jesuit city somewhere in the middle of Latin America". This comes from his *Native Realm*—the best introduction that I know to the area and its tangled community.

The militant plaster saints and their supporting *putti* still gesture grandly over the surrounding landscape of swamp, forest, and the huge fields of collective farms—seeming in each case to be facing eastwards. For me, however, more evocative than the churches and palaces—even more than the ballroom of the former Russian Governor's palace, where in 1812 Alexander I heard the news of Napoleon's invasion, and Marshal Kutuzov received the Order of St George, First Class—are the painted wooden houses of all shapes and sizes scattered through many of the central areas. Their tiny fenced-off gardens seem designed for chickens (although the chickens too have vanished); they give Vilnius, which was until very recently quite a small city, its air of *rus in urbe*, and call up at least an echo of their former inhabit-

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ants. Once, they would probably have been seen as evidence of a shameful local inferiority *vis-à-vis* Western Europe. Now, set against the huge concrete blocks on the horizon, they seem to breath humanity and continuity.

If old Vilnius is largely Polish baroque, old Tallinn in Estonia is unmistakably German gothic, and in the fogs of winter the huge round towers of the old town walls have a singularly grim appearance. According to the stereotypes held by all the Baltic peoples about each other (stereotypes which are shared by the Baltic-German part of my own family), the Estonians have the reputation of having taken much from the Germans and Swedes in terms of industriousness and reserve. Reserve, however, sometimes cracks to something not far from controlled hysteria when the subject of the Russian immigration is discussed. Precisely because the Estonians are a rather reserved and quiet people, this invasion of their limited living-space has tested their patience to the limit.

The Estonian frontier town is Narva, on the swift-flowing river which bears the same name. It was first mentioned in Danish chronicles in the year 1250. A German knight took it from the Danes, the Swedes from the knight, the Russians from the Swedes.

The old town had a Scandinavian appearance, with baroque churches and solid merchant mansions; but these are recorded now only in the excellent Fortress Museum, for Narva was smashed by Soviet artillery fire when the retreating Germans made a stand there in 1944. It was rebuilt in concrete, along modern Soviet lines—as a deliberate symbol of the new order, Estonians believe.

The only major monument to survive, apart from the fortress, is the elegant 17th-century Swedish town hall; but its peach-coloured plaster has been ravaged outside by the weather and inside by the Young Pioneers, whose headquarters it now is. In a freezing February drizzle seeping out of a fog mildly spiced with sulphur dioxide from the huge smokestacks on the horizon, the decaying concrete buildings could hardly present a sadder aspect. Narva looks as if it is truly part of the Soviet Union in a way that the old cities of Tallinn (Reval, in its old German name), Riga, and Vilnius emphatically do not.

The Narva River still forms the border between the Russian and Estonian Soviet Republics, rushing between two great fortresses on its way from Lake Peipus to the Gulf of Finland, fifteen kilometres to the north. On the Estonian side is the Swedish fortress which beat off so many Russian attacks before eventually falling to Peter the Great. In the Leningrad Oblast, on the other side, Ivangorod, the bastion founded by Ivan III reaches a stone arm down into the water.

Both fortresses have now been restored. Dr Eldar Effendiev, Director of the Narva Fortress Museum, is the son of an Azeri father and an Estonian mother. His museum is a little miracle of order and scholarship—an Estonian miracle. He supports Estonian independence. This seemed to me a small but significant example of the failure of "Soviet patriotism" to influence many people whose mixed backgrounds might encourage supranational loyalty. Thanks to Dr Effendiev, the Estonian Fortress Museum flies the flag of the old Estonian republic, now seen everywhere in what is, as I write, still the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. The Russian side flies no flag. Perhaps the Russians are confident enough not to need one; or possibly they can no longer be sure which flag to fly in order to express their reaction to Estonian claims. One thing is certain. Whichever flag the Russians ultimately choose, the territory over which they would fly it would not be restricted to the present Russian federation. In the offices of the Latvian Popular Front in Riga, I have seen a sticker from the old White Russian opposition party, the *Narodnoi Trudovoi Soyuz* (People and Workers Union) which bears the old Imperial *tricoleur* of white, red and blue. The members of the Popular Front do not appear to have noticed that those three colours also cover the whole of the present Soviet Union, including Latvia—as indeed is hardly surprising, since the *Narodnoi Truduvoi Soyuz* stemmed originally from the survivors of the White Army, whose leader General Denikin adopted as his slogan the words "Russia Shall Be Great, United, Undivided".

Narva and Ivangorod sum up a feature of the Soviet Union which has often been remarked upon and which may now be crucial for a peaceful transition in the Baltics: the "subject" areas are so often much better off than those of the Russians. Confidence in "the right to rule" has always been sapped by this embarrassing and painful fact, and in recent years it has certainly shaken the self-assurance of Russians living in the Baltic republics, even as it increased their subjects' contempt for them—a contempt which is often expressed in classically racial terms. The jibes of many Latvians about being ruled by "Tartar Mongolians" and "Asiatic Hordes" might in the past have been reason for pride among Russians who remembered Alexander Blok's line "Yes, we are Tartars, yes, we are Scythians, with slanting, greedy eyes". Today, however, Russia's economic failure has once again led to shame about its position in relation to the West, and among the intelligentsia this shame has been increased by the revelations under *glasnost* of past Soviet crimes.

"Better off" is, of course, simply a relative term. Compared to living standards in Scandinavia, Narva in February does not look exactly a bag of laughs. In comparison with Ivangorod, however, there is no question of the superiority of the Estonian side. The situation in the shops in Ivangorod is almost comically awful—comic, that is, if you don't have to live there. It features, among other object-lessons, a shop marked *Electronic Goods*, which has light-fittings on its shelves, but only candles to put in them.

Even worse is the unutterably dreary nature of the place: it is a true embodiment of *Skushno*, the Russian concept of ennui, but seems to plumb even deeper depths of gloom and boredom. The pot-holed road that runs between the lines of concrete blocks is actually the main road between Tallinn and Leningrad (St Petersburg), a mere 150 kilometres away, but it might as well lead to 1,000 miles of tedious wilderness.

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Leningrad, Ivangorod, and Narva are part of the same process of Russian development which in a series of convulsive heaves cleared the Finnic tribes and their Swedish overlords from the Gulf of Finland, and raised St Petersburg from nothing, on a foundation of swamp and human bones. At the same time, it replaced that traditional and obsessive Swedish and German concern with working on and improving one's immediate environment with an indifference which many Estonians could well call "Asiatic".

OF COURSE, life in many parts of the Baltic is fairly depressing. This was brought home to me very sharply on a visit to Jurbarkas, the Lithuanian rural area, during the election in February. The collective farmers are a great deal better off than their Russian equivalents, but few seemed to have any plans to become free farmers once again. Without access to fertilisers, livestock, or machinery, this is hardly surprising; but it was discouraging that so many mentioned as a disincentive the fact that they would have to work harder.

Meeting these people also brought home the potential for class conflict in these areas, and the effect this is likely to have on future economic policy. The opponents of Baltic independence have been railing against "restoration of the bourgeois republics"; and for once they are dead on target.

The leadership of the Sajudis National Movement is to quite a remarkable extent composed of members of the old Lithuanian bourgeoisie, supplemented by a new technocracy. The candidate in Jurbarkas was a member of both groups, and her elegant British coat (she is a former postgraduate student at Manchester University) contrasted painfully with the gnarled and mud-stained figures of her constituents. In front of me at the electoral meeting was a very Soviet figure—a large, middle-aged woman in a spotted coat like a turnip-eating herbivore swallowed whole by a rather mangy leopard. She subjected the candidate to a barrage of questions and attacks concerning the new cooperatives and their exploitation of the people. In this she was supported by many other speakers. Not a single voice was raised in defence of those bodies—which are, after all, going to be an essential part of any transition to a free market economy. The candidate, an economist, was not surprisingly rather embarrassed. Her reply stressed that the "bad behaviour" of the cooperatives was due to "distortion caused by being part of the Soviet system". What she did not say, but knows very well, is that these distortions are likely to last for many years—longer, quite possibly, than the patience of her constituents.

Narva—in the district called Virumaa in Estonian—is a key part of the strategy of some leaders of the Russian population in the Baltic, who are grouped in the movement known as "Interfront", and could also form part of Gorbachov's strategy. Virumaa is a frontier area with a very large Russian majority; as is Latvia's Daugavpils (formerly known as Dunauburg or Dvinsk), which also lies on the border with the Russian federation. A considerable number of Russians have always lived in Narva—even when Estonia was an independent republic they made up 30% of the city's population. Today they are more than 90% and the Estonians less than 5%. The new wave of immigration came to work in the oil-shale quarries and power stations which give Estonia and Leningrad most of their energy, and have contributed so disastrously to the local ecology.

Gorbachov has said that if republics of the Soviet Union become independent, areas with Russian majorities will be given the chance to remain within the Union. This offer has been taken up by one of the Interfront spokesmen, Yevgeni Kogan, who has called for an autonomous republic to be established in the Narva area—a first step towards separation from Estonia. This has actually damaged Mr Kogan's position with the majority of Russians in Estonia—those who live not in Narva but in the cities of Tallinn and Tartu. They see little advantage in separating Narva. In Narva itself, reactions among the ordinary Russians whom I met were rather mixed. The older people tended to be strongly hostile to Estonian independence, but this did not necessarily mean that they wanted Narva to join Russia. "After all, this is Estonian land", one old lady said, with more generosity than one would expect from a member of an "imperial nation". Younger people often expressed worries about their rights in an independent Estonia—particularly with regard to language—but said that, given guarantees, they will be happy to stay on in in the hope that "Estonia will end up like Finland". Looking at their surroundings, I feared they might have a long wait.

Even the Russian mayor of Narva, Vladimir Mizhui, is a supporter of independence. In appearance a look-alike of Boris Yeltsin, he seems to be using his populist appeal in the cause of national reconciliation—which may not ultimately be true of Mr Yeltsin himself. Mr Mizhui thinks that if Estonia's leaders give the Russians full guarantees concerning language and contacts with Russia, the population of Narva might agree to leave the Union. He has, however, powerful local enemies, for the influence of old-style Communists on "the popular Russian resistance to independence" is very evident. The Party's First Secretaries in Narva and in Kohtla-Järve are leading members of Interfront and are believed to have close links to Boris Gidaspov, the conservative Party chief in Leningrad and patron of the United Workers Movement.

The central motivation of this "movement" is to use the resentment of ordinary workers towards the effects of economic change in order to regain support for the traditional Communists—rather than (as at present) encouraging the support of populist oppositionists like Mr Yeltsin. But, as the failure of most of these figures, and Mr Gidaspov's withdrawal of his candidacy, in the March election show, such efforts are having little effect in Russia itself. In the Baltic republics, with the added element of ethnic insecurity, they might well have some impact.

I REMARKED to a Latvian friend how calm I found the mood in Riga, given its ethnic mixture—Russians are in the majority in the Latvian capital. "Calm!" was her astonished reply. "Where have you been?" The answer is that I have been in Pakistan—and if a situation like Riga's existed in a Pakistani city, there would be an ethnic riot once a month, regular as

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clockwork. But the Latvians, like the Lithuanians, attribute the lack of violence to their reserved northern nature, and there is probably a good deal of truth in this.

On the other hand, I have twice now been jeered at in the streets by drunken youths for not speaking a Baltic language. I had been mistaken for a Russian. They became very apologetic when they learned that I was English, but it struck me that if I had been several Russians instead of one (partial) Brit, the encounter might have ended differently.

It is easy to understand the feelings of the Baltic people about the Russians. In Ivangorod—let alone places deeper in the Russian interior—one can envisage the dream of Russian history from Rurik to the present as an eternal queue for (largely theoretical) cabbages, enlivened by intervals when the queuers start to kill each other. This is partly mistaken, as the economic success of Imperial Russia from 1890-1914 shows. It does, however, bear *some* relation to the truth. My experience with cabbages since arriving in Russia has been generally unfavourable, but I recently ate one which had a pleasantly nostalgic smell—that is to say, it was pleasant until I realised that the smell was of plasticine and what it evoked was childhood. Not that plasticine isn't a pleasant smell—but one quite unsuitable for a cabbage.

In the Baltic, however, this vision of history as one of cabbages is inappropriate and can hardly be maintained. The very stones speak of brighter historical alternatives—even if these stones were laid by foreign rulers. For if history gave the indigenous Baltic peoples their share of oppression at the hands of Scandinavians and German and Poles, it also gave them cultural opportunities quite different from those of the masses to the east—as they showed in their twenty years of independence after the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917. Latvia and Estonia, at least, coped very well with the Slump; and before the Soviet annexation in 1940 had almost exactly the same level of economic development as Finland. The comparison with Finland today is enough on its own to undermine Soviet rule in the Baltic. The Estonians in particular—their language is closer to Finnish, and they watch Finnish television—know very well what they have lost.

ESTONIAN BITTERNESS is accentuated by a feeling of imminent biological threat stemming from the Russian immigration. And this in turn is increased by the fact that in terms of national character they remain very different from the Russians. An Estonian friend gave me an example:

> "In the queues here, the Russians chatter away loudly to each other, and when there's a move forward they all push and shove, with their hands on the back of the person in front. Estonians hate that."

Squabbles in queues are, of course, how riots begin in Central Asia. Estonians are not given to rioting either by temperament or as a matter of present national policy, but almost any Russian habit is now apt to be seen as alien and irritating, and the potential for violence certainly exists on both sides.

Even the good or at least endearingly human qualities of the Russians do not inspire much affection in the Baltic—for example their tendency to undermine their status as an imperial people by their inclination to humanity or, if you prefer, anarchy. Unlike the British, they are really not very good at pretending to be old Romans. On my travels this has often helped me out when I am particularly enmeshed in the nets of Soviet life. (Life, in the traditional language of Soviet Communism, is something which has the impertinence to impinge on Marxist-Leninist theory, with painful results for both parties and for anyone else involved.)

In a restaurant recently, after an hour's wait and maddened by hunger, I noticed that a group of Russian tourists was being served from trolleys, which I raided as soon as the waiter's back was turned. This act of primitive socialist accumulation received an embarrassing degree of support from the Russians whose food I was stealing—embarrassing because it threatened to bring down the wrath of the authorities. But an Estonian to whom I told this story seemed to see it only as further evidence of Russian "slovenliness".

The same mixture of humanity and anarchy has affected my encounters with the Soviet exchange rate. Mind-bogglingly, as far as individual visitors are concerned, this now varies between 60 cents to the rouble (the old rate) and 6 roubles to the dollar (the new convertible rate), depending on what it is you are paying for, where, when, and if the hotel staff (or whoever) choose to regard you as "a tourist". If you yell loudly enough or look pathetic, you can—depending partly on the sex of the person on the other side of the counter—sometimes get the rules bent in your favour by a factor of 1,000%. (This evokes for me nostalgic memories of haggling in South Asian bazaars, but it must make Western business people feel that they have taken a trip with Lewis Carroll.) Inevitably, even the tourist rate is still well below the black market one.

Soviet hotels are not a bad introduction to the reasons why Baltic people feel such chronic irritation at their continued membership of the Soviet Union. The restaurant at the Hotel Riga—supposedly "the best in town"—is so absurdly sleazy that I burst out laughing when I saw it for the first time. Dozens of black-marketeers from all over the Soviet Union, in threadbare suits and black leather jackets, were swilling Soviet champagne and circling uncertainly around the dance floor in the arms of freelance prostitutes, to the strains of the atrocious "lambada" or some treacly "golden oldie". My Latvian companion not surprisingly found it all a great deal less amusing. The fabric of the hotel seems to have grown up with its staff—they speak the same language. Just like its staff, the hotel mutters and moans to itself, its voice rising to an angry growl or fizzing noise when asked to actually *do* something—like provide hot water or electric light.

The economic planners I met in the Baltic states all spoke of "tourism" as the best way to provide foreign currency. Every economist in Eastern Europe is saying the same thing about their own countries. But with hotels like this, forget it. And this is an area that in the 1920s was described by an American traveller as "the cheapest and most interesting in Europe".

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GIVEN THE economic reality, attempts to defend the Soviet record in the Baltic are liable to collapse into absurdities which must surely be evident, even to their authors. I talked, for example, to Arnold Sai, one of the three Estonians on the 45-member board of Interfront. When I made the historical comparison with Finland, he said: "Finland has always had very clever leaders, who have known how to get resources from the Soviet Union. *Our* best leaders were killed by Stalin." A member of the Communist Party for the past 31 years, he added the irony that "Here in the Soviet Union we have been given the same chances and opportunities as Finland, but we have not been able to use them because of the bureaucrats and the administration".

My interpreter told me later that Mr Sai had spoken poor Estonian, with a strong Russian accent. He is one of that group of Estonians, born outside Estonia to Soviet loyalist parents, who for many years have ruled the republic. My driver was explosive on the subject. He had heard Mr Sai on the radio, declaring that the blue, black and white flag of the old republic—derived from the student colours in the old Duchy of Estland—had been given to the Estonians by Hitler. Mr Kogan, the Interfront leader, had meanwhile been trying to persuade me that "Estonia joined the Soviet Union in a free vote." Even many ordinary Russians here realise that this is not true. I met the two men at the gloomy accommodation block of the giant Tsvigatel military plant in Tallinn. The Russian workers brought in to work in such "Union factories" (still run from Moscow) are now extremely worried about their future in an independent Estonia, and any economist would admit that they have good reason. Even without the question of Estonian independence, Soviet military production in plants like Tsvigatel would be cut back; if Estonia becomes independent, it will probably be stopped altogether. For it would be beyond the bounds of human restraint for future Estonian governments not to use unemployment as a means of encouraging Russians to leave, and some nationalists to whom I spoke made no secret of their hopes to do just this.

Precisely because it is so small, Estonia seems to have the potential to become a Baltic Northern Ireland or Sri Lanka. In a tiny country, they simply have no room to manoeuvre. There seems little point, however, in their leaders declaring that a plebiscite in Narva on separation from Estonia is "out of the question".

If the Russians want to make it a question, a question it will be. And if the Estonians want to stop them, they will have to stifle their justifiable rage and hysteria, and make much more conciliatory noises than those which rise up from their nationalist roots. When national spokesmen talk to me "on the record" about the Russians being "colonists" and therefore "without rights under international law", it makes me deeply uneasy. The Soviet Union may go away—indeed it is going, pretty fast. The Russian nation, however, will not.

The Baltic people like to portray themselves as mice who have sniffed at a bear. But sniffing at a bear is one thing, trying to bite several of its toes off quite another. It it not yet certain that most Russian workers will compensate for their misery by adopting—like poor Southern whites in the USA—the mentality of a ruling class. But this process is definitely being encouraged by some of the Baltic nationalists as well as the Soviet media.

IN THE WORDS OF Hagi Shein, Head of Programmes for Estonian Television and Chairman of the Estonian Nationalities Commission, "You can't use living people as stepping-stones, and just tread on them on the way to your goal." Having been used as stepping-stones themselves for so long, it is hardly surprising that many Estonians now feel the need to reply in kind—especially since most of them think that there is in any case no chance of winning over the Russian workers of Tallinn.

The failure of most of the Russians to learn Estonian, and their general ignorance of the culture of the place they now belong to has always provoked fury and bitter jokes.

> "In the Soviet Union, if you speak four languages, what are you? Answer: A Zionist. If you speak two languages? A nationalist. If you speak only one? An internationalist."

Another story—it could even be true, to judge by some of the older Russians I met—describes two Russian women talking in a queue. "Tell me", one of them says, "when did the Estonians emigrate here? Was it before or after the Revolution?"

Such ignorance is not untypical of immigrants everywhere, and Estonian and Latvian nationalists like Hagi Shein or Janis Jurkann (in charge of Foreign Relations for the Popular Front in Riga) think that their movements must take this into account, and go slowly on measures like forcing Russians to learn local languages which they have never had to know in the past. Finno-Ugric is not exactly child's play—at least it might be child's play to a Finno-Ugric child, but not to a 50-year-old Russian worker. Interfront is using the new language laws in particular as a means of stirring up the Russian population, though in fact only people in state and professional jobs will be affected. According to a Latvian acquaintance, "So what if some Russian colonel finds it impossible to learn Latvian and has to give up his state job? He can always go and become a dustman, can't he?" This is a suggestion that I myself would make only to a very old and toothless Russian colonel—and even then I would have to be considerably provoked.

WORKING IN THE BALTIC REPUBLICS' favour, however, is the old division of the Russian intelligentsia into Westernisers and Slavophiles. In the Baltic both are today to some extent sympathetic, or perhaps even neutral, towards the national movements, since they themselves are (at least in the short term) involved to a great extent in trying to revive Russian culture after the damage done to it by the Soviet system. Again and again I have been told by Russian intellectuals here—including Mikhail Alexeyev, a leader of the (pro-Moscow) Communist Party in Lithuania—that *this* is the first priority, rather than oppos-

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ition to national independence. Most intellectuals believe that independence is inevitable but will never be so total as to make them feel that they are living in a foreign country.

Indeed, the Russians in the Baltic do seem on the whole a fairly demoralised lot, flung together from all over the Soviet Union, a vast industrial class, without any real cultural institutions or much sense of community. In the words of a Russian candidate for the February elections: "They are just beginning to feel how humiliatingly poor they are, and to be angry with the Communists for that reason. This could help us." Watching the old, shabby Russian women with their worn faces, lighting candles in the Orthodox churches, one certainly has little feeling of observing a ruling race. In Riga, the former Orthodox cathedral is now a planetarium and the Latvian government is resisting giving it back, on the grounds that it would then be necessary to find another planetarium. . . . It is not clear to whom the religious Russian community leader could appeal for help on this matter.

RIGA—THE CITY of my ancestors—is different again in style from Vilnius and Tallinn. With 900,000 inhabitants it is much larger than either. In Vilnius you walk with ghosts among the gardens of the wooden cottages and in the cloisters of the Catholic monasteries. In Tallinn you return to Reval (the old German name for the Hanseatic city) along silent cobblestone streets between plain medieval houses softened by the mist. But in Riga the streets are broader, and like those of so many northern German cities, are lined with apartment-blocks in drab colours but with pseudo-gothic and Renaissance flourishes. In the Middle Ages, Riga was already a great commercial centre, and its geographical position makes it a more convenient "window on the West" than Leningrad-Petersburg, taking most of the exports by sea from central Russia. Less of the medieval town has survived than in the other two capitals, and today most of the centre is 19th-century. It speaks of progress and endeavour—with some irony, in view of the attitude to work of the present inhabitants, most of whom are now Russian.

Riga was always cosmopolitan. Its most famous Mayor of Imperial Russia, George Armistead, was of English origin, and the red brick church of the former English merchant community (now a student club) still stands above the broad sweep of the Daugava estuary. It was only in 1912 that Latvians achieved a majority in Riga over other nationalities; and they maintained this position for less than 50 years. The difference was that in those days the other nations were mainly Germans, Jews, and Russians, in that order; whereas today they are almost entirely Russian-speaking and of Russian origin.

It is just possible that this cosmopolitan tradition can be maintained. The fact that the Russians are a majority in Riga and in the other two major cities will give them enough confidence in their future not to try to fight it out with the Latvian nationalists. After all, no one has so far been killed—and that is already a great deal in the modern history of ethnic rivalry.

Dead Poems

What's to be done with dead poems, those words
that lie cold as corpses on the paper,
keeping their mouths shut? There comes a point
when it's obscene to prod them any more.

Sylvia Plath, a diligent housewife
pickled hers, waited for smiles to bite back;
another man I know hoards every word,
sorts them for jewels when his luck is out.

Myself I favour arson; burn the lot,
watch flames devour tired might-have-beens,
sentences, tangled verses, bright ideas,
the nearest thing to fame they'll ever know.

It isn't foolproof. Clearing the morning grate
a phrase, two words will suddenly become
interesting, like the half-charred remains
of a clandestine note; enough to set me
wondering if there could be life there yet.

Irene Rawnsley

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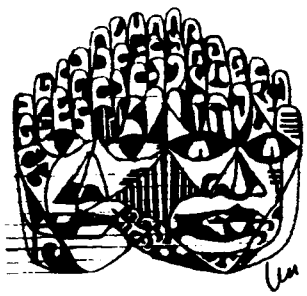
High Road to Nowhere

African Aftermath—By KAYE WHITEMAN



IT MAY SEEM wayward, but when I pause to contemplate all the ironies of the present African condition, I keep returning to the sleepy seaside town of Cotonou on the West African coast. This is the capital of the Peoples' Republic of Benin—the most unlikely peoples' republic in the world, whose current acute political and financial crisis seems to embody many of the problems of independent Africa over these last three decades.

I returned there recently, after an absence of a few years, and was taken aback to find Benin playing out a drama that may be in store for other African states. True, it is a small country, and its problems receive little publicity. In the past, though, it has attracted writers with a penchant for the unusual. Sir Richard Burton, when he was Consul in Fernando Po, undertook a mission to the court of King Glele of the old Kingdom of Dahomey, and produced a model account of that 19th-century visit that still remains a sourcebook for social anthropologists. And in the 1970s, the late Bruce Chatwin—who, like Burton, had a nose for the unusual—wrote his novella *The Viceroy of Ouidah*, based on the life of Francisco da Souza, the celebrated black Brazilian slave-trader. Chatwin also wrote, in "What Am I Doing Here?", an essay on his experiences when he was caught up in the picaresque invasion of Cotonou by mercenaries in 1977.

My visit was timed to catch the tail-end of a conference held in Porto Novo, the run-down former capital, where a retired Deputy Director-General of the International Labour Office, Albert Tevoedjre, had decided to establish the "Pan-African Centre for Social Perspectives". This non-governmental conference centre has made its home, rather improbably, in the former residence of the colonial governors of Dahomey—an imposing wreck now being restored with assistance from a sympathetic French Ambassador who knows how to tap funding for historic buildings. I found myself involved with a diverting group of intellectuals, mainly European (indeed, mainly French), also mainly Marxist and middle-aged to elderly, who were delighted to take wing on the higher flights of rhetoric offered by the subject of "The French Revolution in Africa".

La révolution! La bicentenaire! The whole year had been fleshed out with such events all over provincial France, and indeed throughout what is now usually called *la francophonie*. Yet in November 1989, the discussions were more than a little piquant. Gods of the Left, especially the Marxist Left, were toppling on the streets of Berlin and Prague (not yet in Bucharest), and here on the doorstep in Benin events were occurring which contained the potential for an explosion unprecedented even in the unstable states that litter the body politic of the African continent.

Benin appears to be witnessing "the withering away of the state" in a manner that Marx could not possibly have foreseen. Since the end of 1988, its official economy has barely functioned. The Banque Commerciale du Benin has had an exclusive monopoly since President Mathieu Kerekou carried out his nationalisation programme in 1974, at the same time introducing Marxism-Leninism as the official ideology of the new Peoples' Republic. (This was also the moment at which the former French territory changed its name to Benin. Confusion resulted, because the real Benin Kingdom—which also gave its name to the great Bight of Benin, in the armpit of Africa—still exists some 500 miles away, within the neighbouring federation of Nigeria.) The Banque Commerciale was forced to close its doors in November 1988, admitting that there were no funds to pay its depositors. A privately-owned publication, *Tam-Tam Express*, achieved notoriety by publishing the names of dignitaries who had helped to break the bank by drawing extravagant loans. (The newspaper closed down a few months later.)

With assistance from France and elsewhere, strenuous efforts have been made to rehabilitate Benin's banking system, and especially to attract back private banks. Pre-1988

KAYE WHITEMAN *is editor-in-chief of "West Africa", the London-based weekly. He read history at Queen's College, Oxford, and from 1973-82 worked in Brussels with the section of the EEC's Information Department concerned with developing countries. He travels widely in West Africa, specialising in the French-speaking nations. A writer and broadcaster, his publications include a study of "Enugu: The Psychology of Secession" in "The Military and Politics in the Nigerian Civil War" (Athlone Press, 1969); he is also the author of "The Lome Convention" (Atlantic Trust, 1975) and "Chad" (Minority Rights Group, 1989).*

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depositors at the Banque Commerciale are still unable to obtain their funds, I was told, although for new depositors the bank continued to tick over.

The state pays its civil servants sporadically, and several months late—with the result that, when not actually on strike, most stay away from work, trying to make ends meet by moonlighting. Benin's Customs officials exact additional fees from visitors, telling them it is the only way they can get paid, while state-employed journalists have been known to request *douceurs* for covering an event. Aid projects are at a standstill if they involve government employees; although any foreign aid workers who continue to live in the country are able to draw their salaries and allowances (always assuming they don't bank at the BCB).

To impress aid donors, Marxism-Leninism has been jettisoned, and President Kerekou has placed himself in the hands of the West. Most new aid committed to Benin goes towards the salaries of its 50,000 public-sector employees—a bill of about $10 million a month. But the Treasury is increasingly empty. Some 80% of government revenue comes from Customs & Excise, and these tolls are not being collected because the officials simply do not turn up to work. Only thanks to international donors are state employees paid at all, and without signs of major political change, there is a limit to such benefactions.

Over the past eighteen months, a simmering state of revolt has come to the boil in periodic demonstrations; on two occasions the Kerekou government got tough, and used troops (his presidential guard was still paid, armed and loyal) to fire on the crowds. Yet, curiously, life has gone on without open hardship. Markets such as the Libyan-constructed Dantokpa market in central Cotonou are thronged with people (perhaps civil servants off work), and smuggling from and to Nigeria, some 30 miles away, is increasingly rife. This is aided by the long and porous nature of the border, and the venality of border guards on both sides, but the greatest incentive to what has politely been called "alternative trade" is undoubtedly the heavy devaluation of Nigeria's currency, the Naira.

Devaluation has heightened the contrast with that overvalued currency in Benin, the CFA franc. This is the money of Coopération Français-Africaine, the Franc Zone—a convertible currency area guaranteed by France, and involving most of its former black African territories. In the past, it has been seen as a factor for stability, attracting investment as well as helping to maintain French influence; and in its heyday it was arguably quite successful. With the increasing problems of African economies, however, this convertible currency area has fallen victim to its own success. The word is that, as it becomes an increasing liability for the French Treasury, some way must be found to downgrade it, even though it is an essential prop for France's sphere of influence.

Benin's problems may be taken as a visible part of the iceberg of the Franc Zone's problems. All banks in francophone Africa have serious liquidity problems, and there have been several failures. In Benin, politics merely compounded the problem. No doubt the devaluation which the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are increasingly pressing on the Franc Zone would ease the situation in some respects. They propose a change in parity with the French franc (at the moment, one franc equals 50 CFA francs). But to the extent that this would probably make imports more expensive, it would in fact only be nibbling at a chronic situation—the crisis of the state.

Should Benin exist as an independent state in the modern world? I cannot pretend to answer this question, but for those who wish to attempt it, an examination of the past 30 years is instructive. Benin should, of course, have remained part of Afrique Occidentale Française, the French West African Federation which foundered in 1960 on the rocks of the rivalry between Abidjan and the capital, Dakar, and split into eight component parts. Dahomey was precipitated into full independence as a republic, with flag, national anthem, and Gaullist-type Constitution, but virtually no preparation. It had an additional misfortune. Since it had been the scene of especially active missionary work in the educational field, many students had gone on to become civil servants in the AOF. After disbandment, large numbers returned to the tiny state, and had to be accommodated. Thus began the problem which has still not been resolved.

Even under the French, who ruled the country from 1894 to 1960, Dahomey had a reputation for political turbulence. It went through more governors than any other territory, partly because of the high level of political consciousness of its citizens. It had long been known as "the Latin Quarter of Africa" because of its export of intellectuals. It was the country where everyone thought they could become a Minister, but by the end of the 1960s it had become the land of the permanent *coup d'état*, and somehow I always seemed to be in and out of the place. In the space of six years, between October 1963 and December 1969, it saw seven successful military take-overs, as well as one strange episode in which a confused military régime actually faded away.

THIS WAS THE 1968 régime of the improbably named Colonel Alphonse Alley, an engaging graduate of St Cyr, much given to old Army drinking songs like *Le Chef de Gare est Cocu* and *Tiens! Tiens! Voila le Boudin!* Alley was viewed for a period by the mob in Cotonou as a knight on horseback who might save the country from corrupt politicians. In fact he was too nice to seize power from General Christophe Soglo, his superior officer, and was vastly embarrassed when power was thrust on him in December 1967, only a week after he had accompanied Soglo on an official visit to Paris during which General de Gaulle testily extracted a promise that he would not overthrow his boss. But the majors under his command denied him the option, and in power he soon found that charm was not enough.

The only contribution of the Alley régime was to try to hand power back to the civilians, while banning the leaders of the three main political parties from standing in the elections of May 1968. Since the leaders merely set up surrogates, the upshot was exactly the same three-cornered division of the country as Dahomey had had from the time mass politics began there, after World War II. Faced with this stalemate, Alley hit on an even less credible idea. He simply

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dumped supreme power in the lap of Emile Derlin Zinsou—a wily medical doctor from Ouidah who had never won an election—and took the Army scurrying back to barracks. Zinsou lasted a surprising eighteen months before himself falling victim to a new *coup d'état*.

General Soglo, on the occasions when I met him, also seemed pretty bewildered by the Dahomeyan merry-go-round. A bonhomous Indo-China veteran, he was reputed to have pinched Elizabeth Taylor's bottom during the filming in Cotonou of Graham Greene's *The Comedians* (Dahomey was the nearest comparable environment to Haiti, which had refused permission to film). He used to live in a small villa just outside the military camp, which had a sign outside saying: "*Attention, chien méchant.*" Most Dahomeyans would have amended that to "*femme méchante*", for Madame Soglo, a French Eurasian, was a "dragon lady" who terrorised the officer corps, more than offsetting the affability of her husband.

Dahomey had experienced its first breakdown in political power in October 1963, when crowds besieged the palace of President Hubert Maga. The Army, under a reluctant Colonel Soglo, intervened simply to defuse the situation. It was barely a coup, and, despite the crowd scenes, scarcely a revolution. Soglo then installed Maga's two main rivals, Sourou Migan Apithy and Justin Ahomadegbe, as President and Prime Minister in an uneasy duumvirate.

Little is remembered of the régime (it too was dumped by Soglo, in 1965), except that neither leader chose to live in Maga's palace. That was considered unlucky, as it had cost $3 million—a lot by the standards of the early 1960s, especially for an unviable mini-state already experiencing the doubtful joys of bankruptcy. Every bit as bizarre as its legend, the palace was constructed in Hollywood-Egyptian style, with sweeping staircases, huge sculpted doors, and pillars with bronze snakes coiled round them. It also had a special gold-plated balcony, from which Maga had fondly imagined he would be able to wave to the adoring populace.

Despite his unceremonious deposition from presidential power, Maga had a second chance in 1970, and lived in his beloved palace for another two years. But it took a major crisis, in which the country nearly fell to pieces in bloodshed. After the coup of December 1969—which proved to be the last throw of Colonel Maurice Iropa Kouandete, Dahomey's most turbulent coup-maker—a military triumvirate under Colonel Da Souza was installed. They organised fresh elections, with the same old big three dividing up the country in the same north-east-west triangle of power—a Nigeria in miniature.

Tensions became so acute, however, that the election was suspended before all the results were in. The story is that, with a threat of northern secession by a fraction of the Army, and the beginning of an exodus of northerners from the south, Dahomeyans invoked the ultimate *deus ex machina* of the Gaullist francophone world. This was Jacques Foccart, the balding, poker-faced, grey eminence of both de Gaulle and Pompidou, and principal machine-minder of France's special relationship in Africa. Foccart, it was said, spent a hectic 48 hours in Cotonou engineering a Constitution which provided for a rotating civilian triumvirate to accommodate the political requirements of Dahomey's three political leaders. The system survived one rotation, from Maga to Ahomadegbe, before the Army struck again, led by Colonel Mathieu Kerekou, Kouandete's blood-brother. This time it was for keeps.

Everything changed after that. Dahomey became the Peoples' Republic of Benin in 1974, and political effervescence was buried in the official mystifications of Marxism-Leninism. Amazingly, Kerekou has been in power ever since. By 1972 the country was undoubtedly suffering from coup fatigue, as well as the indignity of frequent jokes about its changes of government. But Kerekou seemed to have asserted definitive control over the Army (give or take two coup attempts and the 1977 mercenaries' invasion, which was clearly counting on a Fifth Column that never materialised). In adopting the rhetoric of the Left, he bought off the *gauchistes* who were strongly represented in the schools and trade unions but had also succeeded in penetrating the Army. Although state socialism even in a limited form had damaging economic effects, all this was masked by the real basis for Kerekou's longevity in power: the benefits which came to Benin's economy in the spillover from Nigeria's oil boom, which turned the port of Cotonou from a white elephant into a booming entrepôt. By the same token, the collapse of the Nigerian economy in 1983 put Benin back into the realms of extreme fiscal unviability, made worse through having been lulled by the boom years.

The appalling indicator of exactly how far Benin had turned full circle was the government's increasing inability to pay its civil servants. In the first five years after independence, Benin had been conspicuous as a country where the French had to make good the recurrent budget deficit. In 1988, France, with which Benin had maintained the old links, despite all the revolutionary diatribes, announced a special subvention for payment of salaries. Since then the situation has grown progressively worse.

Benin also turned to Nigeria, which provided a few crumbs, although Nigeria is really in no condition to assist anyone. Ironically, the Benin delegation that went to Nigeria to seek assistance is supposed to have asked (perhaps as a signal of pure desperation) whether it might not be possible to become the 22nd state of the federation. Nigeria, which had contemplated intervening in the "secession" crisis of 1970, was horrified. Quite apart from the appalling budgetary drain, it would upset the political and ethnic balance. But this is something that could still be forced on Nigeria by close ethnic ties unless the present crisis can be resolved.

CAN political change, East-European style, make any difference? The country is now in full flight from its "Afro-Marxist" experiment. In December, amid strikes and unrest, the official ideology of Marxism-Leninism was abolished. A still unveiled statue of Lenin was stoned, and the Place de L'Étoile Rouge, where a student was killed in a demonstration, is now known to locals as Tiananmen Square. In February, a remarkable "National Conference"—which some, pursuing the 1789 analogy called the *États-Généraux*—grouped all the "*forces vives*" in the country. It succeeded in forcing Kerekou to accept, weeping,

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what he described as a "civilian *coup d'état*". He remains as Head of State, presiding over a council of all the old politicians, but there is now a Prime Minister with a government of technocrats chosen by the Conference, and charged with trying to rehabilitate the economy and supervise a return to multi-party civilian rule by next January, at which time Kerekou will presumably evaporate. It is probably Benin's last chance, and there will be many who will wish the experiment well but it is hard to see any régime, however great its popular backing, not only tackling Benin's structural problems but accepting the kind of rigour that could make the country workable in the way that the "adjustment" expected by the Washington institutions makes inevitable. One of the problems of multi-party democracy was the "tripodisation" of the country into three broad groups. There is no indication that things would be any different now.

At the moment there is a tendency to fall back on the traditional society. Possibly that holds the answers to the appalling national crisis. Witness, for example, the enthusiasm with which the Fon peoples celebrated the centenary of the death of King Glele in December 1889. On my visit, I went to Abomey, the old capital (in the company of the ageing French Marxist jollyboys), and was struck most of all by the astonishing time-telescope it represents. This, after all, was the Glele visited by Burton, friend of the slave-trader Francisco da Souza, and it is a strange thought that his female descendants still go to his tomb every five days to take him alcohol and food.

But Abomey was a mournful and sorry spot, in spite of the festivities. No king reigns there, unlike the Asantahene in Kumasi or the Oba in Benin proper. Such was the depredation of France's policy of direct rule. Maybe in the face of the bankruptcy of the state, we may yet witness a restoration. Stranger things have happened. . . .

One of the most unusual scenes of the independence of Dahomey/Benin came in May 1972, in the days of the triumvirate when Maga was "rotated" in favour of Ahomadegbe. The three Presidents, in top hats and tail coats, sat on the front row of a dais, their smartly dressed wives ranged behind them. At a given signal, they changed places in a complex manoeuvre to the solemn music of the national anthem, their wives executing the same ceremonial ballet. Six months later, the new President was out of power, adding in retrospect to the symbolic futility of the occasion. That ceremony took place on a broad highway which at night is brilliantly lit. It runs along the Cotonou seafront for a majestic mile, before petering out. It happens to be called the Boulevard de France.

AUTHORS

Walter Laqueur is a Professor at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University and Chairman of its International Research Council; he is also co-director of the Institute of Contemporary History in London. His most recent book is *The Long Road to Freedom: Russia and Glasnost* (Scribner's and Unwin Hyman, 1989). His article in this issue will form the introduction to *The Soviet Union 2000*, written in conjunction with John Erickson, Edward Luttwak, Paul Goble, Gur Ofer, and Arthur Waldron, to be published this summer by St Martin's Press.

Don Bloch is an American writer who has lived in Amsterdam for the last twenty years. A collection of novellas, *Passing Through*, and a novel, *Face Value*, are published in hardback by Heinemann and in paperback by Paladin. His next novel, *The Escape Artist*, is to be published (in English) by Van Genne in the Netherlands.

D. C. Stove is a lecturer in the Department of Traditional and Modern Philosophy at the University of Sydney, and author of several works including *Popper and After* (1982), *Rationality of Induction* (1986), and *Cole Porter and Karl Popper, and other Reputations Re-Considered* (Bradford Books/MIT Press, 1989).

Elizabeth Jennings's volumes of poetry include *Moments of Grace* (1980), *Extending the Territory* (1985), which won the W. H. Smith Award, and *The Sonnets of Michelangelo* (1988). All are published by Carcanet, who in March 1989 brought out *Tributes*, a volume of collected poems.

Brian Moeran was appointed to the Chair of Japanese Studies at the University of London in 1986. An anthropologist by profession, he has written extensively on Japanese society and culture. His books include *Okubu Diary: Portrait of a Japanese Valley* (1985) and *Language and Popular Culture in Japan* (Manchester University Press, 1989).

Jean-François Revel, the French philosopher and critic, writes a regular column for *Le Point* in Paris. His most recently translated work, *How Democracies Perish*, was published in 1985 by Weidenfield (London) and Doubleday (New York).

Meg Harris Williams is a freelance writer and artist. Her books include *Inspiration in Milton and Keats* (Macmillan, 1982), a study of Emily Brontë, *A Strange Way of Killing* (Clunie Press, 1987), and, on psychoanalysis and literature, *The Apprehension of Beauty* (with Donald Meltzer, Clunie, 1988).

Victoria Mather is a seasoned traveller and travel writer. Film critic of the *Daily Telegraph* until 1989, she is now Arts Editor of *GQ* magazine and a columnist on the *London Evening Standard*. She is a member of Ned Sherrin's *Loose Ends* team on Radio 4 and a contributor to the BBC programmes *Cinema Two* and *Screenplay*.

Geoffrey Heptonstall, film and theatre critic of *Cambridge Style* and *Cambridge Voice* magazines, has written a number of BBC network radio programmes. His article on popular song, "Goodbye to Berlin", appeared in the December 1989 ENCOUNTER.

Malcolm Rutherford is Assistant Editor of the *Financial Times*.

IN Gunther S. Stent's article in the March issue, "Can We Explain the Mind?", eight paragraphs were printed out of order. The section in column two of page 63 beginning "(1) The intentional character of mental states. . . ." down to ". . .selected for attention" on page 64, should have appeared in column one of page 63 after "The reasons for their rejection include the following claims. . . ." We apologise to Professor Stent most sincerely for this unfortunate error.

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ART

Magician of the Brush

By Denys Sutton

THE ABILITY OF an artist to arouse the emotions down the centuries lies in his skill in creating his own world. Thus, when encountering certain types of people we may reflect that they could have stepped out of the pages of Balzac, or Trollope, or Proust. We are made free of an existence that never ceases to enchant us, which can yield further pleasures each time we plunge into it. For obvious reasons, fewer painters are able to do this: they work in paint, not words. Those masters who possess this quality—Giotto, Masaccio, Van Eyck, Dürer, Giorgione, Titian, and Rembrandt come to mind—heighten our apprehension of life and make us aware of the eternal verities of religion, of love, of nature.

Inevitably, portraiture occupies a major position in this hierarchy; and it became increasingly popular in an age of introspection such as the 17th century, which gave us Shakespeare and Descartes. Artists at this time became keen on attaining status and power—as with Rubens and Van Dyck, both of whom were knighted, and Velázquez, who was awarded the coveted Knighthood of the Order of Santiago.

Diego Rodrigo de Silva Velázquez (1599-1660) is one of those artists who, to use Bernard Berenson's famous phrase, was a life-enhancer. It is impossible to see a group of his works without experiencing a lightening of the heart. This certainly occurred at the exhibitions of his paintings held recently at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and at the Prado, under the sponsorship of the Banco Hispano Americano. The Spanish master's varied work may be looked at in equally various ways—from the standpoints of the aesthete, perhaps, or of the scholar eager to examine the finer points of chronology, or of the interpreter of iconography. However, any failure to appreciate the nuances of his subject-matter (assuming that the reading of it is correct) cannot impair the pleasure provided by his brilliance as a virtuoso of technique.

R. A. M. Stevenson (cousin of the novelist Robert Louis Stevenson) noted in 1895, in his engaging and influential volume on Velázquez, that rather than examine the details of the artist's life as provided in 1888 by the German art-historian Carl Justi in his *Diego Velázquez und sein Jahrhundert*, it might be

> ". . . more amusing to take a turn round the Prado before you have read about Velázquez, before you have heard what picture is doubtful, and when each canvas was painted. One is apt to see too readily in a canvas what one has previously learnt in a book. If one has guessed the dates of the pictures, and roughly grouped them into periods, upon no other evidence than the style of the work or the testimony of the subject, one really understands the growth of the painter's prowess, and needs the historical document merely to correct trifling errors and to elucidate doubtful points."

Stevenson's attitude may render the role of the art historian superfluous, but it is appropriate to a painter whose work is so direct in its impact, so refined and robust at the same time, and which creates such an illusion of spontaneity that it proves intoxicating. His pictures cleanse the eyes.

VELÁZQUEZ HAD THE good fortune to be born and brought up in Seville, at that time the most prosperous and most "international" city in Spain. His originality was soon evident in his paintings of *bodegones* such as *An Old Woman Cooking Eggs* (painted in 1618, and now in the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh). Like his other pictures of that type, or those with religious themes, it demonstrates Velázquez's realism as grounded on observation of life. Appreciation of this congenial picture, which depicts a scene that could still be found today, may call upon reactions outside the realms of aesthetics—the memory of eating a meal prepared in an earthenware dish. The effect on the imagination is akin to that exerted by Proust's famous Madeleine. This painting—like *The Feast of Bacchus* (1628-29, in the Prado), a naturalistic scene in which the god crowns with vine leaves one of a group of peasant drunkards, and which has been interpreted in many different ways—possesses the romantic appeal which artists and writers such as Manet and Sargent, Gautier, Richard Ford, and Sacheverell Sitwell also discovered in *"cosas de España"*.

DENYS SUTTON, *editor of "Apollo" magazine 1962-1987, organised the Bonnard and 18th-century French art exhibitions at the Royal Academy, and various other major art exhibitions in Tokyo, the United States, and London. Formerly art critic of "Country Life" and the "Financial Times", his many books include works on Bonnard (1957), Derain (1959), Toulouse-Lautrec (1962), Whistler (1966), Rodin (1966), Walter Sickert (1976), and Degas (1986).*

* The illustration is of Velázquez's *Study for the Head of Cardinal Borja* (dated 1643-45).

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However, problems connected with Velázquez's realism still remain to be considered—for instance, the extent (if any) to which Caravaggio, the founder of a naturalistic school of painting, influenced work such as Velázquez's *Adoration of the Magi* (1619, Prado). At first sight "Caravaggism" might seem to explain the head of St Joseph on the right side of the canvas; but then, how and when would the Spanish artist have seen the Italian's pictures? Julián Gállego refers in the exhibition's catalogue to the work of the Toledan artist Juan Bautista Mayno (1578-1641) but the comparison does not seem very convincing. Perhaps that new realist mood should simply be attributed to the *Zeitgeist*. (But it is also possible that the handling of the paint in the faded crimson of the Virgin's dress reflects the influence of the Venetians.)

VELÁZQUEZ'S GRASP of character was considerable. He did not shrink from making a harsh statement, as in the remarkable portrait of the dour and devout Mother Jéronima de la Fuente (1620, Prado), who was later to become Abbess of a convent in Manila. The artist's eye for a sharp visual effect led him to pick out the red edges of the book in her hand.

A portrait fails to conquer if it lacks an incisive quality; it has to arrest, and hold the attention. In the portrait of Luis de Góngora (1622, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), the firmly modelled head—with its exquisitely toned ear—and the rendering of character are admirable. The poet appears as a man who is both obstinate and resigned, yet with reserves of strength: a powerful intellectual capable of creating the artificial conceits associated with Gongorist poetry.

Grandees, great ladies, princes, princesses, kings and queens file before us in Velázquez's gallery of portraits. He broke away from the "playing-card" convention that characterises many portraits before him. His creations palpitate with life. Their variety is astonishing, whether it be shown in the famous bravura portrait of Juan de Pareja (1650, Metropolitan Museum of Art) or in his shrewd assessment of the man often described as "the Pope's barber" (1650, private collection), which presents affinities with the portrait-sketches of Bernini.

THE SOURCES OF Velázquez's style as a portrait painter even now demand further inquiry. Was Aureliano de Beruete correct to claim in his excellent book on the artist, published in 1892, that Velázquez had learnt something from El Greco, who knew his father-in-law, the painter Francisco Pacheco? Problems of attribution also remain, such as the precise status of a full-length portrait of Philip IV of Spain in the Ringling Museum, Sarasota; the head would certainly seem to be by the master. Another vexed question concerns the full-length portrait of Don Juan de Calabazas painted during the 1630s (now at Cleveland), the attribution of which many critics doubt, but which was probably skinned during an early cleaning.

One of Velázquez's grandest portraits is of *The Conde-Duque de Olivares* (1630, Prado), a noble statement in a baroque language. Like others of the Spanish master's works, this painting betrays the influence of Rubens, who spent a year in Madrid in 1628. The result, however, is typical of Velázquez. The picture has remarkable details, like the leaves, or the bold, brilliant sash in gold on crimson. Julián Gállego observes that the Count-Duke is represented as an equal of the Monarch, but it is tempting to ask whether a tinge of irony creeps into the treatment of this powerful figure, who was later to fall from power.

The possibility of examining this picture in New York alongside the Metropolitan Museum's version of it (which was once in the Elgin Collection), makes it clear that the latter is not by Velázquez. Juan Bautista Mazo, Velázquez's son-in-law and pupil, has been suggested as its author. Mazo's name is raised by Julián Gállego in connection with the rarely seen equestrian portrait of Don Balthasar Carlos in the Westminster Collection, which is another (and superior) version of the picture in the Wallace Collection. However, Señor Gállego's suggestion that the Westminster picture may be compared with the English conversation-piece seems to me wide of the mark.

DEPICTION OF the contemporary scene is by no means an innovation of the 19th century, as is sometimes believed; Velázquez showed his skill in this genre when painting *The Lancers* (1635, Prado), which represents the Dutch forces, after the siege of Breda, surrendering to Spanish troops under the command of Don Ambrogio Spinola. It was painted for the new royal palace on the outskirts of Madrid, the Buen Retiro. This is one of Velázquez's masterpieces, in which sharp-eyed portraiture combines with superb manipulation of space and aerial perspective. It is also one of those pictures that brings out the master's gift for combining directness of touch with the expression of a relatively complex theme. Like Shakespeare, Velázquez enjoyed presenting a play within a play, as occurs in the early *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* (National Gallery, London), or the celebrated *Las Hilanderas, or the Fable of Arachne* (1657, Prado), which was executed for a private client.

Velázquez had the knack of representing subjects such as Mars, and the less familiar figures of Menippus and Aesop (1636-40, Prado), through an intensely individual treatment that brings them vividly to life. With their casual clothes and air of mystery, they seem to have strolled out of the picaresque novels of Cervants and Quevedo. As Alfonso Pérez Sánchez says in the exhibition catalogue:

> "We should no doubt derive a moral message, somewhere between stoic and cynical, from these figures and see in them the true wisdom of those who have learned to renounce worldly ties, commitments and illusions."

Enigmatic images such as Aesop prefigure the paintings of Manet, for whom the Spanish master was a prince among painters: the still-life detail in a picture of this type thrilled Nicolas de Staël when visiting the Prado towards the end of his brief career.

No less striking are the haunting dwarfs and buffoons—the

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hombres de placer who entertained the king and enjoyed considerable license in their comments. That Velázquez painted such arresting pictures was only to be expected from a man with his gift for psychology, who was not without his own strain of melancholy—as may perhaps be deduced from the probable self-portrait in the Museo de Bellas Artes in Valencia.

Few painters have produced so many pictures that seem timeless because of their innovatory character. Two of his most astonishing works are exquisite views of the gardens of the Villa Medici in Rome (Prado); these paintings leap ahead into the age of Corot. Much ink has been spilled over their function, and it might well be that they have some connection with the stage which was then a feature of court life in Madrid.

LANDSCAPE ATTRACTED Velázquez. He may have picked up hints from Rubens and other Flemish masters, and nearer home Collantes had painted landscape; but Velázquez brought his own special touch that permitted him to broadly brush in the snow-capped range of the Guadarramas. Stevenson was enchanted by Velázquez's landscapes—as well he might be, since he was himself a landscape painter and a devotee of Barbizon, the village near Fontainebleau which gave its name to a school of 19th-century French painters, who included Millet and Théodore Rousseau:

> "On the way to Toledo I saw the sierras, just as Velázquez often painted them, of a powerful blue streaked with stretches of snow, and looking out from an agitated sky full of rifted clouds of a dirty white colour. For Spain is by no means always bright and gay, though always atmospheric and profound. . . ."

A rich and varied landscape occurs in Velázquez's dramatic picture of *St Anthony Abbot and St Paul the Hermit* (1633, Prado), which reminds us that he was a profound religious painter. His little-known *Temptation of St Thomas of Aquinas* of the 1640s, from Orihuela, was one of the "problems" of the Prado exhibition. Its still-life details present affinities with those of Zurbarán. Velázquez's subtlety of touch is apparent, too, in the restrained *Crucifixion* of the 1630s (Prado).

On his trips to Italy Velázquez, a keen connoisseur, studied both old and modern painting as well as the classical sculptures of the Villa Medici. He was an admirer of Titian and Tintoretto, and Venetian echoes appear in the glints on the armour in the powerful portrait of the Count de Beneventi (1648, Prado). The influence of Caravaggio and Guercino may be observed, too, in *The Forge of Vulcan* and *Joseph's Blood-stained Coat Brought to Jacob* (in the Prado and the Escorial respectively). Both were painted in Rome in 1630, and have recently been admirably cleaned, under the direction of John Brealey of the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

In the course of his second voyage to Italy, Velázquez acquired, on behalf of Philip IV, Tintoretto's large-scale sketch for *The Paradise*, painted the superb portrait of Pope Innocent X (in the Doria Collection), and greatly enjoyed himself—he had an affair there, and fathered an illegitimate son.

That Titian was one of the major influences on Velázquez's work may be observed in one of the world's most celebrated pictures—*The Rokeby Venus* (1650, National Gallery, London), which was painted for the Marquess of Eliche. Various other old masters—Cranach and Boucher, for instance—painted the nude, but Velázquez's picture is in a class of its own. It is difficult to define in precise terms the elements which make it unique—the colours? the form? the air of mystery?—but it confirms the relevance of Paul Valéry's dictum that the most beautiful thing renders one silent with admiration.

The Spanish master's gift for getting to the heart of the matter is manifest in the rapid way of handling paint which makes a sketch such as *A Woman as Sybil* (Meadows Museum, Dallas), glow with life. Then, too, he had an eye for an arresting pose, with which he created an extraordinary impression of space in the dramatic figure of Pablo de Valladolid. His passion for colour, moreover, grew with the years; a master who had started with dark, earthy tones adopted a more refined and subtle palette, exemplified in the salmon-pink and silver dress worn by the Infanta Margarita.

Velázquez's career would have been difficult without the constant support he received from Philip IV. Not the least of his achievements was the artistic "dialogue" that existed between him and the Spanish monarch over the years. Philip is depicted at various ages and in various poses—out hunting for instance, in the painting of 1632-33 (Prado), which is also notable for its sympathetic treatment of the dog. Later portraits of the monarch, including those in the Prado and the National Gallery, depict a man who had experienced much in life. However, the decline of Spain's power in no way marked Velázquez's art.

Velázquez was an extremely busy man—besides his portraits, he was deeply involved in the decoration of the Buen Retiro and of Philip's hunting lodge, the Torre de la Parada; with his usual competence he executed various decorative paintings. Later he produced a mythological composition—*Mercury and Argus*, derived from Ovid—for the Hall of Mirrors at the Alcázar.

The artist's calmness and phlegmatic temperament, referred to by Philip IV, permitted him to deal capably with his numerous duties, which became even heavier when in 1652 he was appointed Chancellor of the Royal Palace in Madrid. Nevertheless, it could have been the tension between such administrative tasks and his own work that inspired his creativity; an analogy may be drawn with the way in which Balzac's debts only spurred him on.

Manet, Carolus-Duran, Renoir, Degas, Sargent and Whistler are among those artists who have delighted in Velázquez's bold, subtle, and impressionistic style. The artist's pleasure in creating images that never cease to enchant us was expressed at its peak in *Las Meninas* (1656, Prado)—where Philip and his queen are merely dim figures seen in a mirror, while the painter, with his Order of Santiago proudly displayed, is a focus for the composition. The artist has become the king.

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THEATRE

Corneille & Comedy

By Malcolm Rutherford

LAST MONTH I wrote about the random nature of the theatre—how some plays fail, while others take off for no obvious or connected reasons. There could be no better example than *The Liar*, which ended a successful three-month run at the Old Vic in March. Who would have imagined that one of the most pleasing plays in London in 1990 would have been a relatively unknown piece by Pierre Corneille? (And translated by Ranjit Bolt, an Anglo-Indian born in Manchester and educated at Balliol College, Oxford, who works as an investment adviser, and lists his principal interests as 17th-century France, and cricket.) Probably most British theatre-goers were scarcely aware that Corneille wrote comedies at all, associating him largely with *Le Cid*.

In fact, Corneille wrote 32 plays altogether, almost as many as Shakespeare, with whom he has a great deal in common as a dramatist. He began with comedies, switched to tragedies, then tended to alternate. *The Liar* was written in the same year (1647) as he wrote *The Death of Pompey*. Corneille explains this dual output in his Dedicatory Epistle to *The Liar*, noting that some people would find it hard to believe that the two plays came from the same pen. Ever sensitive to criticism, he claimed that he wrote *Pompey* to show those who doubted it that he could still produce powerful verse in the manner of his earlier *Cinna*. He wrote *The Liar*:

> ". . . to satisfy the many others who, as is the wont of the French, are fond of change, and, after so many grave works with which our finest pens have enriched the stage, asked me for something lighter which would not do more than amuse them."

He acknowledges that comedy was responsible for his first rise to fame and is not shy about revealing his sources. *The Liar* is pinched from *La verdad sospechosa* by the Spanish playwright Juan Ruiz de Alarcón (1581-1639), though just as Shakespeare would have done, Corneille makes some striking, if simple, changes. For example, he shifts the setting from Madrid to Paris.

The English title, *The Liar*, seems to me somewhat harsh. *The Fibber* might have been more appropriate, for lying suggests some malign intent and there is nothing at all malign about either the Liar himself or the play as a whole: not a line of it could cause offence. Still, the title is literally translated from the French, *Le Menteur*, so we shall have to stick with it.

The Liar is called Dorante. He arrives in Paris from the provinces—though he claims to come from the wars in Germany—seeking sexual and social conquests. He is a thoroughly amiable fellow, apparently well enough educated and with a talent for improvisation, but he cannot or will not stop telling whoppers. It would be pointless and misleading to go into the details of the plot, save to say that no harm is done to anybody and it ends in marriage.

A programme note for the Old Vic production reminded us that Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* was subtitled *A trivial comedy for serious people*. This is exactly what *The Liar* is. There is no attempt to explain the psychology of why Dorante tells lies. No opprobrium is attached to him for it. There appears to be no social satire or general comment on society either. The play is utterly superficial, which is why it is so delightful.

One can understand why that may have worked in the Paris of the mid-17th century. Corneille himself wrote in another work:

> *. . . the stage,*
> *Is now the darling of all men of taste*
> *The talk of Paris, and the provinces'*
> *Desire, the sweet diversion of our Kings,*
> *The people's joy, the pleasure of the great,*
> *For it ranks first among their pastimes now.*

There were not many theatre companies and they did not perform every night. However, people flocked to see the plays when they were on, sometimes several times over. They talked about them, wrote about them, and there was the court to play to. It was all very stylised, but so are opera and dance. And there were some great practitioners: Corneille, Racine and Molière. *The Liar* was probably viewed at the time as a rather pleasant pot-boiler.

What is much more surprising is that *The Liar* should have been a hit in London in 1990, when the theatre is hardly the talk of the town. The play is as trivial and as stylised as it ever was. It has not been modernised, nor has any underlying social significance been discovered in it. Moreover, it is in English rhyming couplets. Yet it works.

PART OF THE explanation must lie in Ranjit Bolt's translation, which is colloquial and sometimes free, but in no way seems to depart from the spirit of the original. Bolt uses off-rhymes: for example, "want" and "Dorante", "fop" and *"amour-propre"*. The colloquialisms burst out all over the place:

> *You've fought in countries that you've never seen*
> *And given balls that didn't cost a bean.*

There are frequent changes of style and rhythm:

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Three times I skewered him like meat
He fell a bloody bundle at my feet.

Or again:

It's not unusual these days
For people to employ such soubriquets.

And:

You could throw in some trite philosophy
About the laws of femininity.

The revelation is the flexibility. It turns out to be possible to be more articulate on stage with the use of rhyming couplets, broadly translated from the French, than in some English plays that go in for more realism.

Yet, whatever the felicities of the text, *The Liar* is not going to work without the most brilliant production and attention to detail. The earlier, implied comparison to *The Importance of Being Earnest* is too flattering to Corneille. *The Liar* has no characters like Lady Bracknell, and no particularly memorable lines. It does not compare to Noël Coward either, for even the most brittle of Coward's plays have feeling. *The Liar* is a trifle: it depends on style to keep it together.

The Old Vic was a good place in which to perform *The Liar*. Since it was acquired and refurbished by the Canadian businessman, Ed Mirvish, it has become one of the theatres that are a pleasure to visit. For a start, although it is still recognisably the Old Vic, it seems clean. Look up at the ceiling: the attention to detail is all around you. Mirvish's artistic director is Jonathan Miller, and it was he who directed *The Liar*. Miller is one of the few directors who move from drama to opera and back; and that, I think, is a crucial point. The two have much more in common than is generally supposed. Both are about how best to use a stage and all the accoutrements that go with it: the sets, the costumes, the timing, and even the make-up.

THE LIAR is an opera without music. As an analogy, I would put it in the same genre, if not the same class, as the smaller Mozart operas: *Cosi* or *Seraglio*. The music apart, they require the same talents to direct and to act. The Old Vic production appreciated that. The sets were superb: they could have been devised for Mozart. So far as I could tell, the costumes were absolutely in period and of a piece with each other. There was no carelessness about hair-styles, and again, so far as one could tell, no skimping on costs. Above all, there was speed of action. When one set of characters departed stage-left, the next set came on stage-right and was talking before you could say Corneille. Had there been gaps, even of a second or two, the audience might have remembered the trivial and inconsequential nature of the play. It was essential to keep up the illusion of continuous movement.

There was also imagination. When Dorante arrives in Paris, he acquires a valet called Cliton. There is no record of how Cliton was played in the first French performances in the 17th century—he may or may not have been a central character. The touch of brilliance in the Old Vic production was that Cliton was a Welshman. Played by Desmond Barrit, he was a very big Welshman, slow but not stupid. He reminded one inescapably of a mixture of Sir John Falstaff and Fluellen, the man who in Shakespeare's *Henry V* makes Pistol eat a leek. (The Corneille connection with Shakespeare keeps coming in.) Much of the success of the role came not so much from his words as from his face. The face, and indeed his whole body, showed him reacting—with considerable admiration—to the size of the Liar's whoppers, and at the same time wondering what was truth and what was invention. It worked largely because of the Welshness, which set him apart, though in no unkind way, from the rest of the characters. I do not think that Jonathan Miller imposed that on the text. The text was there to supply it. But if Miller had made Cliton a Scot, or even a Cockney, it would not have come off in the same way. The hint of Shakespeare struck me as entirely deliberate on Miller's part.

Two other characters stand out. Dorante's father is called Geronte, although there appears to be no malicious intent through his name to link him to the gerontocracy, any more than Dorante is especially *doré*. He is from the provinces, but knows Paris, wants a grandchild, and is indulgent, if not naive, about his son's lies. It must be a nice, minor part to play, provided that the production is good. The same goes for Argante, the lawyer with a stammer. (Having a speech defect is almost a tradition of French comedy.)

The women are nondescript, as indeed they often are in Shakespeare. Even when he is not lying, Dorante finds it hard to remember which is which, and is not entirely sure which one he is marrying in the end: nor is the audience. Still, playing a nondescript part is quite an art, and they did it well as part of the whole. If they had fallen short, the piece would have gone down with them.

I saw *The Liar* twice out of sheer pleasure and would go again if it were still running. That was how the original audience in Corneille's time treated it, just as one might go again and again to an opera or a ballet or to listen to a symphony. It is odd that one seldom feels that way about modern plays; perhaps there is something to be said for verse and stylised conventions. Equally odd, however, that such professional resources should be put into a play that not even Corneille claimed was meant to do anything more than amuse. There is a mismatch somewhere: too many good actors, too few good new plays? Yet the real test of any theatrical performance is that it should be well done. *The Liar* passed with distinction.

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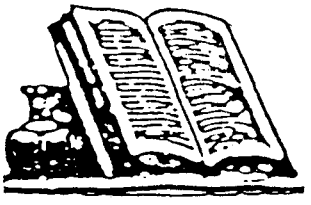
IN THE MARGIN

Learning from William Morris

By Anthony Hartley



WHERE IS Socialism today? Only in Cuba or in Africa are there still to be heard the echoes of those declamatory dogmas that once echoed round the world. Even the milder versions of Western Europe are on their way out. There is nothing particularly socialist about President Mitterrand and his administration. In Austria a socialist Chancellor is supervising non-socialist policies. In Sweden the socialist model which was once held up for admiration has collapsed. If Neil Kinnock comes to power in Britain, it is unlikely that he will either wish or be able to opt for anything that can really be called socialism in the traditional sense.

But where does all this leave William Morris, a professed socialist and one of the fathers of the Labour Party? Out of date? I would hope not—and, indeed, the signs are far from unfavourable. The more his political achievements seem to fade, the more his cultural importance takes on substance.

For, with what now seems almost superhuman energy, Morris managed to be the inspirer of much that has grown and prospered today. Socialist though he was, his firm, Morris & Co., was a model of individual enterprise, pioneering a new market for beautiful objects and constantly innovating in design and manufacture. The idea of the house designed as a whole, with matching colours and furnishings, was invented—or, at any rate, commercialised—by Morris. This is something which is today taken for granted by anyone who sets out to create a home. Morris is the ancestor of all the interior decorators and designers of the modern world. The difference is that they do their designing for the rich, whereas he believed that beautiful things could be within the reach of everyone.

Morris & Co. designed and made furniture, textiles, wallpapers, wrought iron, and stained glass. Its business extended from familiar domestic patterns to ecclesiastical furnishings (then going through a revitalisation following the Oxford movement). *The Dictionary of National Biography* describes Morris as a great designer of patterns, and it is true that many of them seem to be as sought after today as they were a hundred years ago. He described his profession as that of a designer, despite his work as a poet and writer of prose.

Indeed, there was little in the way of craftsmanship that Morris did not attempt. His work with textiles led him into experiments with natural dyes, the use of which had largely ceased as a result of the competition from their aniline rivals. In his country house at Kelmscott, Morris established the famous Kelmscott Press, on which he printed his own works and some of the most famous editions of the English classics. The influence of all these activities was enormous. So accustomed to it have we become that we hardly realise its extent. It was, of course, an age in which craftsmanship was revived throughout Europe. In France there was *art nouveau*; in Austria the Wiener Werkstätte. In Britain itself Morris did not lack conscious or unconscious disciples. Eric Gill's typography is one instance; William de Morgan's tiles are another. Morris changed the look of England and also the way the English looked at their surroundings.

Morris's written work would have constituted a career for most men. His poetic romances alone, *The Earthly Paradise* and *The Life and Death of Jason,* contained over fifty thousand lines of verse. It is verse of a high standard and can be read with pleasure provided that, as Anthony Powell has written of the classics, one feels "entirely free from responsibility to pause for a second over anything that [threatens] the least sign of tedium". At the time, and in the wake of the Romantic Movement, *The Earthly Paradise* was judged to be Morris's most considerable poem. We have lost the taste for fiction in verse form. Nowadays, it is *Sigurd the Volsung*, a retelling of the Nibelungen legend, which appears to be his masterpiece. It has much of the true feeling of primitive epic. All Morris's knowledge of early Germanic literature (he had translated Icelandic sagas), all the vigour and energy of his temperament, all his understanding of the simplicity of the warrior went into *Sigurd*. The result was a great poem eminently well worth reading and reviewing. It should stand at the centre of any selection of Morris's verse. Unfortunately, G. D. H. Cole, viewing Morris principally as a forerunner of his own Guild Socialism, put none of it into the Nonesuch Morris (*Selected Writings*, 1934).

HOWEVER, poetry was not Morris's only literary achievement. His prose romances, of which the best are *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Well at the World's End* should appeal to an age which has taken the Inklings to its heart. In fact, Morris's tales seem more adult than C. S. Lewis's Narnia books, and less unevenly written or subject to ideological intrusions than *The Lord of the Rings*. But they are clearly part of the ancestry of these much-read works—something which, one imagines, neither Lewis nor Tolkien would have denied. The desire to escape from the modern world, to enter into a parallel universe, which exists with its own rules and its own imaginative justification, is strong in the late 20th century. The teenagers who once addressed each other in Elvish or wore buttons inscribed with "Gandalf Lives" might do worse than look to Morris for satisfaction.

Add some writings on art and politics, verse translations of *The Odyssey* and *Aeneid* and didactic visions like *News from Nowhere* and *A Dream of John Ball*, and we complete

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the list of Morris's writings. In its sheer bulk it is awe-inspiring; its quality is, on the whole, maintained. Nowadays it is hardly read—something that seems a pity, given the stature of Morris in the wider history of English culture.

All sorts of consequences flow from his work. The revival of the craft movement, the preservation of ancient buildings, organisations such as the National Trust and the Society for the Preservation of Rural England, improvements in the design and typefaces of books, the revival of textile design and the weaving of tapestries, the development of the post-Tolkien fantasy—all these things had their inception in William Morris and his work. It is an extraordinary record, and all the more extraordinary for being largely forgotten. Our renewed concern for the environment, for conservation and ecology, makes most of this seem so natural as to be taken for granted. The name of Morris is not so much associated with his historic achievements as with his follies—his attempts to make English into Anglo-Saxon once again, or the self-made clothing of simple-life liberals before 1914.

It was natural that Morris should take to the socialism of his day. It was a form of revolt against what seemed to him the dark industrial society of Victorian England, with its bad taste and its lack of colour and light. We are beginning once again to value what the Victorians did, but Morris could hardly be expected to take that view. He yearned for an England that was bright and clean—a pre-Raphaelite ideal, born from the backgrounds of Italian primitives and the legends of saints. What he valued in socialism was its idealism and its attempt to renew society. That it would evolve into a creed that saw industrialisation in appalling conditions as its main achievement, he could not foresee. One may surmise that had he seen the bureaucracy of state socialism as it was to develop in later years he would have been repelled. His ideal of a national community, like that of Thomas Carlyle, stemmed from a medievalism that never really existed, but whose craftsmen could be seen as embodying that permeation of the substance of daily life with the influence of art, which he valued above all things.

SO WHAT HAS Morris to teach us today? His influence on our lives is considerable, but what has become of his message? What relevance has it for a Britain where we must all live by successful industrialism? It might be thought that the principles he preached would go to the wall in the name of productivity and competition. None the less, a society which works hard and lives on its nerves needs some influence to soften its harshness and impart to it repose and serenity. This is where Morris comes in. The idea that it may be worth taking months of time and infinite trouble over one object made from wood or stone or glass gives continuity and purpose to the lives of those who understand it. Men and women will work all the better in surroundings which they can admire. A room will be illumined by an ornament or carpet that brings into it a happy combination of colour and form. Morris's ideas, in short, can be summed up in the need that each of us feels for an aesthetic element in our existence, from whichever of the arts it may be drawn. In his essay on "the Aims of Art" he defined what he thought human beings could gain from this flash of illumination in their lives: "They will discover, or rediscover rather, that the true secret of happiness *lies in the taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life*, in elevating them by art instead of handing the performance of them over to unregarded drudges. . . ." This is perhaps a more sustainable idea than the medievalism of *News from Nowhere*.

Nor are Morris's battles to make art enter into the very texture of society finished. His ideas have, indeed, found an influential spokesman in the Prince of Wales. Morris would have approved of Prince Charles's campaign against the coarse and brutalising impact of an architecture that has lost its humanity. All forms of art were for him something to be understood by everyone and to enrich mankind at large. The idea of an architect imposing a building whose dimensions and materials crushed, rather than exalted, human beings, and taking refuge from criticism in his technocratic expertise was alien to him. He would have supported the Prince, and his romantic sensibility might have been titillated by the thought that it was an heir to the throne who had come to the rescue of a human dimension for one of the arts. To build a bridge between art and the individual citizen was what Morris saw himself as doing, and he would have felt sympathy for anyone continuing that work.

Who reads Morris today? Who quotes from him? It must be confessed that his writing is not enormously quotable. It foams along, and short passages are not easily extracted. The best-known quotation in the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* is ". . . London, small and white and clean. . . ." from the prologue to *The Earthly Paradise*. But he should be read for all that.

Above all, his life and what he achieved should be contemplated. For it shows, better than most lives, how the monotony and the mediocrity of much of modern life may be relieved and brightened; how, even in the midst of contemporary post-industrial society, something may be done by a single individual to create beauty where it was hardly to be found before. William Morris was a great man, and I would end by repeating that his work is worth reviving, were it not that so much of it is still alive.

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LETTERS

Post-Communist Challenge

LEO KATZEN'S article in the May 1989 issue ("Africa's Man-Made Crisis") is interesting but hardly noteworthy comment on the economic development problem. This problem, of course, is much broader than economics alone.

However, "States of Mind", Adam Zamoyski's observations about the effects of migration and tourism in the July-August issue, are astute and perhaps unique. On this point compare, or rather contrast, Thailand and the Philippines in this part of the world. This situation is at least as dangerous as Communism ever was and deserves to be debated over the next 50 years as Communism has been over the last 50. Imagine converting the resources used against Communism to the cause of world development.

The trouble is that money alone will not do the job. There is first of all the intellectual challenge for a better understanding, and the creation of the will and capacity to achieve results.

To be dramatic about it, we have a choice—either to "get on the ball" and devote our talent and resources to development, or, to maintain our military might to hold back the hungry resentful hordes at the gates of the Western world.

RICHARD PRINGLE

Mindanao
The Philippines

Beyond Trevor-Roper

HUGH TREVOR-ROPER is "satisfied that an ideologically defunct, territorially reduced and internationally assimilated Soviet empire is more likely to serve our interests than the chaos that would follow its uncontrolled disintegration . . . ." ("Aftermaths of Empire", ENCOUNTER, December 1989). Other main themes of his are that Russian nationalism is subterranean but very much alive; and that, ideology being elastic, strong states can survive its popular decline by paying lip-service to bits of it. But do these ideas make contact with Soviet reality today?

The old Russian nationalism was propelled by a *troika*: Orthodoxy, Pan-Slavism, and Autocracy—all pretty sluggish imperial steeds even in their own time. Soviet Communism relied successfully on the myth of the International Proletariat and the Party's fanatical discipline, with the General-Secretary acting, after Stalin, as a sort of autocrat-in-committee. Thus Soviet rule, if futilitarian, was much more dynamic than Czarist. But that period is over and cannot be repeated.

Today's Russian nationalism, as shown in the *Pamyat'* (Memory) society (and, for instance, in the writings of Mikhail Antonov), is a rather feeble affair which seeks to compensate for the country's current collapse. Antonov himself advocates a return to pre-revolutionary spiritual values. More strident voices are xenophobic, including anti-Semitic. All in all it is unlikely that the Russian republic of the Soviet Union, even though it is to have its own Party bureau and Congress of People's Deputies, will manage to command non-Russians with a lot of Slavophile old hat.

As to territorial reduction, it must happen. A ruined Moscow has nothing more to offer to the Muslim republics, Georgia, or to the Baltic states. It will have its work cut out to maintain union with its Ukrainian bread-basket. Not even bits of the Marxist-Leninist ideology will be saleable in these places.

So I suggest, with all the confidence of the non-historian, that the Party really is over and both the pre- and post-1918 empires too—and that our real problem is how to assimilate at least their European components in to the life-style of the West. The West could still make a mess of its own triumph simply by imagining the continuance of Sovietism. Indeed our leaders usually view M. S. Gorbachov as a powerful figure who is "reforming Communism". Yet the word "reform" hardly applies to his role. If he proceeds as he is going, he is an abolitionist; if he U-turns he will be sticking to Article Six as the protagonist of an impossible Sovietism, part 2. Surely we should urge the Soviet people to bypass "democratisation" and opt for democracy? In his recent book on "Gorbachevism", Alexander Zinoviev remarks that the Soviet population well knows the difference between these two terms, which is that between "canalisation" and "canal".

Of course, Western policy-makers may choose to be agnostic, with Trevor-Roper, and keep out ideologically and materially. But in that case they should prepare themselves for a long time of troubles and distinguish more carefully between what is meant to be happening and isn't, and between what is meant not to be happening and yet is.

CHARLES JANSON

London

Truth-Telling Without Paradox

When Mass-Culture Prevails—By GEORGE BAILEY

GEORGE URBAN BEWAILS "the sleazy junk-culture of the West" that is "so pervasive and bestrides the world with so little shame". Amen. But may I add a paradox or two to the paradox of truth-telling headlined in the title of his recent article (ENCOUNTER, November 1989).

It is no secret that the West lives in a money culture with a commercial ethic—as a field of semantic signposts conspicuously attests: "They made him an offer he couldn't refuse . . . Money is the only censor . . . That's the bottom line . . . I do (or don't) buy that", etc. Some tags go back a long way—"Every man has his price", "*non olet*". Even so, there was more than a little stir when ex-President Ronald Reagan recently accepted two million dollars for a short lecture tour in Japan. Reagan replied to charges of acquisitiveness by reminding us that he could have made a much larger fortune if he had chosen to return to his life-long profession of film-acting. One may speculate in passing how the ex-President's return to the film world would have fared. He could have played himself in "the Ronald Reagan Story".

There is a curious contingency between the Soviet and American situations. This is not "the convergence of Capitalism and Communism" that Andrei Sakharov had in mind, but more in line with the old saw about *les extrèmes se touchent*. The Soviet Empire has suffered shipwreck because it aggressively practised *anti*-economics and ran headlong into bankruptcy. The American way of loosely-bridled free enterprise pays more attention to economics than to anything else. Yet the politicians of the affluent society, who are basically managers, talk a good fight but are unwilling to do anything imaginative if it costs money. It's cheaper to let things just happen, to let things take their course. Urban's paradox is not likely to be resolved if it proves expensive.

THIS CONTINGENCY has a comprehensive cultural effect: there is something like "Soviet-Americanism" abroad, stalking the world. Television and radio lend themselves perfectly to the blunt, wide-open, "square" message, the placard approach—about as subtle as a recruiting poster. This is the spirit or *élan vital* of Vladimir Mayakovsky ("the cloud in trousers") who wrote billboard poetry for the Party, stringing resounding slogans together. With this same urge, the most successful American films (i.e. biggest box-office ratings) tend irresistibly not to caricature

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(which qualifies as a literary genre) but to cartoon. The successful *Batman* was recommended to me by an Afghan diplomat at the United Nations. "Make sure you see it in a large theatre", he said, "because the sound effects are the best part of the show." He was right: they were.

And thus the "paradox" (one among a great many) is of two systems—the pro-money and the anti-money—the latter strangling freedom at every turn, and the former catapulting it into license wherever possible. Extending Urban's pessimistic argument, are we not likely to have pretty much the same aesthetic result, a cartoon-culture?

In Communism, "the dictatorship of the proletariat" superimposes, as we now all know, total misrule by blockheads. In capitalism an élite (Roosevelt once called them "economic royalists"), driven by economic laws to achieve an expanding scale of industry, must cater to the taste and general desires of the masses in order to do so. History instructs us about the disappearance of the patron in art and his replacement by the mercurial support of the paying public (a transition bluntly summed up in Johnson's letter to Lord Chesterfield).

Now the East as well as the West will henceforth be subject to the same dynamics. "Telling the truth" about them, realistically, candidly, will no longer involve a paradox. I foresee a renaissance of critical thinking, for all critics will be telling it "like it is".

GEORGE BAILEY

Munich

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Question & Answer

IT IS well known that Marx and Engels shared the prejudices of their age and occasionally made abusive remarks, mainly in private correspondence, about Magyars, Slavs, Jews, Negroes and Latin Americans. George Watson in his memoir of Raymond Williams (ENCOUNTER, January-February 1990) says that they advocated "racial extermination" and "genocide on Socialist grounds". These are grave charges. As scholar, critic, or literary sage, can he support them with evidence?

NICHOLAS JACOBS

London

I HAVE ALREADY done so, and in this journal: "Race and the Socialists" (ENCOUNTER, November 1976), collected in my book *Politics and Literature in Modern Britain* (Macmillan, 1977). I quote a Marx article of 1856—"every tyrant backed by a Jew"—published several years after Marx had issued Engels's articles on Pan-Slavism in his *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (January-February 1849). "The chief mission of all other races and peoples—large and small—is to perish in the revolutionary holocaust", Engels wrote in 1849, since they are "ethnic trash" and the mere left-overs of history; and world revolution will cause "not only reactionary classes and dynasties but also entire reactionary peoples to disappear from the earth", which—he concludes—is what progress means.

Ironic that socialist genocide should have been so readily forgotten. Early in this century socialists were proud of their genocidal and eugenic theories, notably H. G. Wells (in *Anticipations*, 1902) and George Bernard Shaw, and they boasted about them publicly. They were proud, above all, of having outlived the notion that human life is sacred, and they could see that the ideal of equality naturally meant mass-killing, since the inferior and the unfit must go. Shaw's preface to *On the Rocks* (1933) is headed "Extermination", which, he says, must be "put on a scientific basis". "If we desire a certain type of civilisation and culture, we must exterminate the sort of people who do not fit into it"—and he calls on scientists to devise efficient exterminatory techniques. Which after 1933 they did.

Ignorance among recent socialists about the history of the idea is notable, no doubt because they are still trying to believe that socialism was Left-wing; and Marxists (I sometimes think) would rather do anything than read Marx. Perhaps they are alarmed at what they might find there; and perhaps they should be. Others have been more studious. Hitler is said to have told Hermann Rauschning that the whole of National-Socialism was based on Marx, a debt documented in a chapter called "Hitler's Marxism" in my book *The Idea of Liberalism* (Macmillan, 1985).

As for Marx and Engels sharing the prejudices of their age, it would be interesting to know what evidence there is that Victorians in general were racialists. Neither of the two great parties of state, the Liberals and the Conservatives, offered programmes of racial extermination, so that genocide may be not just a fact of socialism but a distinguishing fact.

GEORGE WATSON

St John's College
Cambridge

On the Index

INDICES OR INDEXES? I sympathise with Edward S. Webber of Papua New Guinea ("Letters", January-February 1990), and my schoolboy Latin (if indeed that is relevant) is 20 years more rusty even than his.

But what is wrong with "indexes"? It was good enough for Nestor in *Troilus and Cressida* (Act I, iii, 343):

> *And in such indexes, although small pricks*
> *To their subsequent volumes, there is seen*
> *The baby figure of the giant mass*
> *Of things to come.*

For a modern mentor I would choose Joyce M. Hawkins, the wise compiler of the *Oxford Paperback Dictionary* (1979), who plumps for "indexes". My *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1976) also gives "indexes", but adds ". . . *or*, esp. tech., *indices*".

If it is permitted to cite *Fowler's Modern English Usage* these days (and why not?), the original edition (1926), under "Latin plurals", suggests that "indexes" is fitter for popular writing, while scientific treatises tend to "indices". In his second edition (1965) Sir Ernest Gowers was content to leave that view unchanged.

ALASTAIR K. ROSS

London

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Life & Letters Today

London

ANIMAL FARM? *The edited transcript of the trial of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu published after their execution reads exactly like many of the plays by authors comprising the so-called Theatre of the Absurd [writes Alexander Walker]. The tête-a-tête between the Ceausescus and their judges could not be improved on by Adamov, Genet, Beckett or Jarry, all of them masters of disjointed, meaningless, repetitious, illogical and incomprehensible utterances. I particularly relished Elena Ceausescu being asked: "Are you suffering from some psychological problems?" and retorting: "You are rhinoceroses who are suffering from psychological problems." It was, of course, the 77-year-old Romanian playwright Eugene Ionesco whose play "Rhinoceros" posited a world of terrifying conformity in which every human being, for safety's sake, assumed the hide and horn of the beast.*

How strange and grim to go to your death, like Mme Ceausescu, quoting the very metaphor invented by one of the régime's self-exiled enemies.

EVENING STANDARD

Jerusalem

CENSORSHIP: **The Israeli army has banned Shakespeare's** *Hamlet* **from Ketziot prison camp for Palestinians, in the Negev Desert, as being subversive, because Hamlet, in his soliloquy, weighs whether to take up arms or suffer in silence. But military sources said the decision appeared to be an error of judgment and would be reviewed. Banned books include Tolkien's** *Lord of the Rings***, and Jack London's** *Sea Wolf***.**

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Zurich

MY FOOT: *Apparently the traditional fear of "four-letter-words" is, following the Anglo-Saxon pattern, also disappearing in the German-language area. In the new edition of the Langen Scheidt Dictionary for schools (recently revised and published in Berlin, Munich, Vienna and Zurich), one can find "yuppies", "rumpies" and "woopies", and even "fucking cold".*

The editors seem to be following the Zeitgeist. *Ten % more words are listed in the 1,440 pages. Not all are in the four-letter category. They also have an item which lists the synchronisation of German feet measurements with Anglo-Saxon shoe-sizes.*

DER TAGESSPIEGEL

New York City

STICKY LOVE: **Lech Walesa arrived in New York recently amid much fanfare.**

"I think it's wonderful that he should see our country and the way we live—it's a wonderful feeling," said Polish dance teacher Carole Golis of Maspeth, Queens, who was grand marshal of last year's Pulaski Day Parade. The executive director of "Polonians Organized to Minister to Our Community Inc." in Sunset Park said: "I have children in my dance group, and when I ask them if they'd like to go back, they say, 'No, we love it here. We have bubble gum. We have sneakers'."

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

New York City

TV POLITICS: *At the height of the last Presidential campaign an Opinion Survey poll inquired into the relative knowledge among American children of items advertised on television and the names of US Presidents, past and present. One result was that the children knew the names of alcoholic products better than the names of the country's political leaders. One 7-year-old achieved a perfect mark on ten beer and whisky brand-names but referred to* **"Aprilham Lincoln"** *and* **"Ragon"**. *There was also a reference to the then current campaign between* **"Push"** *and* **"Dukaktus"**.

DER TAGESSPIEGEL

California

LOG-ROLLING: **Loggers in Laytonville, California, think Dr Seuss is a grinch himself and say their kids shouldn't be required to read his 1971 book "The Lorax" because it's anti-logging. But a special committee of the Laytonville school district has rejected a petition to have the book taken off the second-grade Required Reading List because, the petition alleges, it "criminalises" tree-cutting.**

Dr Seuss, 85, whose real name is Theodor Geisel, and his publisher, Random House, had no comment.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

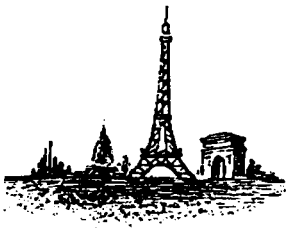
Washington, D.C.

THE LATEST THING THAT WAS: *The actor Jack Nicholson said three years ago that he would "like to play people that haven't existed yet, a future something, a* **cusp** *character" William Safire writes. Do you realise what the emergence of* **cusp** *as the most avant-garde term for "***vanguard***" means? It means that* **cutting edge** *is no longer on the cutting edge. That's what has to happen to the words used to describe the most advanced thinking, the latest thing. Who says* **the latest thing** *anymore? A few traditionalist designers, maybe. When the Scottish* **at the forefront** *and the French* **in the vanguard** *and the British* **of the state of the art** *gave way to* **on the cutting edge** *(note the wide range of prepositions), it was only a matter of time before a replacement would be demanded.*

Enjoy being **on the cusp** *for a few years. Then be careful how you use that pointed word, for it will date you. See those poor old codgers with their* **state-of-the-art cutting edges***? They thought they were out front in their day.*

NEW YORK TIMES

Paris



NO-NO NANA: *Shop and restaurant owners along the Champs Elysées have declared war on an army of "traders" who clog the famous pavements. They have mobilised a self-defence committee and are prepared to fight off beggars with their fists if necessary. "My members have had enough", said committee chairman Roland Pozzo di Borgo. "Tramps, prostitutes, beggars and drug addicts are spoiling the area. Should the most beautiful avenue in the world become no more than a common boulevard?" He also lamented the lower educational standards of the local prostitutes.*

DAILY MAIL

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Janet E. Buerger

Foreword by Walter Clark, Technical Appendix by Alice Swan

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